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·A·SPIRITUAL·  
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No. VIII.

A SPIRITUAL COMPENDIUM.

**ROEHAMPTON :**  
**PRINTED BY JAMES STANLEY.**

# A SPIRITUAL COMPENDIUM,

IN WHICH  
THE PRINCIPAL DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY OF  
PERFECTION ARE EXPLAINED.

BY  
FATHER GASPAR DE LA FIGUERA,  
OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

Translated from the Spanish by  
MRS. R. BENNETT.

EDITED BY REV. GEORGE PORTER, S.J.

LONDON: BURNS AND OATES.

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## PREFACE.

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THE SPIRITUAL COMPENDIUM was written by Father Gaspar de la Figuera, for the direction of his penitent, the Count of Benavento. That nobleman appreciating the great value of the book, asked the author to publish it, but Father Gaspar persisted in refusing to allow it to appear under his name. The Count, however, was not to be baffled, and without obtaining the holy man's consent, he induced his chaplain, Toribio de Arenas, to print the book as his own.

In the second edition, which appeared after the death of Father Gaspar, De Arenas restored the book to its author, and explained how his name had found its way into the title-page of the first edition.

Father Southwell, in his *Bibliotheca Societatis*, describes the *Spiritual Compendium* as *non mole magnus, sed succo maximus, continens in se*

*medullam Christianæ perfectionis*—"a volume unpretending in form, replete with unction, giving the very pith of Christian perfection.

The *Suma Espiritual* has run through many editions in Spanish. The first appeared in Valladolid, in 1635; in 1637 it was reprinted at Valladolid and at Saragossa; in 1645 at Barcelona; in 1648 at Seville; in 1653 at Alcala; in 1662 at Madrid; in 1676 at Brussels; in 1686 again at Seville; in 1690 at Ambers; in 1698 a third time at Seville; in 1709 again at Barcelona; in 1720 again at Ambers; in 1728 a second time in Madrid; in 1755 at Valentia; in 1766 at the same place; in 1795 Salvador Fauli published the sixteenth edition.

The English translation was made from the Spanish edition of 1857, Barcelona.

A Latin translation appeared at Dillingen in 1692; an Italian translation at Bologna in 1650; and a German translation of the Third Treatise of the *Spiritual Compendium* at Munich, in 1701.

De Backer, *Ecrivains de la Compagnie de Jésus*, série ii., p. 194, gives the following brief account of Gaspar de la Figuera.

"He was born at Bilboa in 1579, entered the Novitiate at Salamanca in 1594, and for

several years filled the chairs of Philosophy and Theology.

"When the Marquis of Zeralbo was appointed Viceroy of Mexico by Philip II., he took Father de la Figuera with him as his confessor.

"After a stay of six years the Father returned to Europe, but on the way was made prisoner by the Dutch, and suffered much ill treatment at their hands. After the recovery of his liberty, he presided as Rector over the Colleges of Burgos and Salamanca. This holy Religious died at Valladolid in 1637."



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*Respecting the things necessary to be known before beginning the way of Prayer.*

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## A SPIRITUAL COMPENDIUM

IN WHICH ALL THE CASES AND DIFFICULTIES  
WHICH OCCUR IN THE WAY OF PERFECTION ARE  
EXPLAINED AND RESOLVED.

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### First Treatise.

*Respecting the things necessary to be known before  
beginning the way of prayer.*

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THE PARTS INTO WHICH THE WORK IS DIVIDED.

**T**HIS Summary and Spiritual Compendium is divided into three treatises. In the first treatise is laid down all that those who are desirous of praying well should know before entering into prayer.

In the second treatise are given the conditions most necessary for those who wish to find matter for prayer in the three ways of perfection, according to the method of St. Ignatius, the Founder of the Society of Jesus, as contained in the wonderful book of his Exercises, whence all the following considerations are taken.

And in order that these spiritual counsels may be practised, to the second treatise is added a third,

consisting of *Dialogues of Christ our Lord with the soul, His spouse*; whence is shed a shining light, by which may be beheld all the secrets which pass between the soul and God. Admirable counsels are, moreover, given for arriving quickly at the highest degree of perfection.

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## CHAPTER I.

### OF PRAYER IN GENERAL.

PRAYER in general is a raising up of the mind to God, and asking blessings from Him. Nevertheless, all cannot raise their minds in one and the self-same way, but only as the Holy Spirit imparts to them; and His Majesty usually does this by sweetly accommodating Himself to the character and occupations of the individual, that he may operate with less resistance of nature, and with more satisfaction and perseverance.

2. Let us make use of two illustrations. A boat and a horse, a bird and a flash of lightning, have to go from Valladolid to Simancas. He who should insist upon all four going along the highroad, because it is beaten and frequented, would be in the wrong, for the boat could not proceed, but would be stranded on the wayside; the bird could not walk step by step, and the lightning could not travel on the road seeing that it is fire. Let each proceed in its own proper way, not exchanging with each other, and their progress will not

be hindered. Let the boat betake itself to its proper element, and then borne along by the current it will reach its destination without any difficulty, whilst the lark or the swallow will cleave the air with its wings. On the other hand, if the horse were to attempt to pass through the air, he would immediately fall, not having wings wherewith to fly, and in the stream along which the bark sails he would be drowned. Lastly, the lightning, issuing from the cloud without being seen or heard, goes whither God sends it, burning up everything which it encounters on its path.

3. Such also are the ways of prayer. He who meditates goes along the safe and well known highroad; he who contemplates is furnished with wings, and in the high and pure sphere of the presence of God, passes whole days to our wonder; for we cannot understand a thing without first being able to imagine it. He who prays by means of acts of virtue, reposes on the current, and progresses day and night without being conscious of it, and without it seeming to him that he has done anything. He who loves is as the lightning, uniting himself with the good pleasure of God in spite of all the hindrances of the world.

4. The other illustration is this. Suppose that four artists had to make a figure of Christ Crucified, and that one of them knew how to paint, and another how to use the chisel, and the third to decorate, and the fourth to mix colours. To command them all to paint would be to condemn the three who could not paint to do nothing. If, however, the object be

to produce a figure of Christ, let each one use the tools he is familiar with, and all will find occupation. Why torment him to paint who only knows how to embroider? and why beg of him to embroider who only knows how to paint?

5. It is not necessary to explain this illustration, because it is of the same nature as the first comparison; it may however be mentioned that it is always requisite to take a certain number of points as the matter of prayer, which may serve as the canvas to the artist. To enter upon prayer without any forecast is to tempt God; and upon such points as have been prepared, the individual must meditate, contemplate, elicit acts of love, or make acts of virtue. In this matter, the director of the person must not trouble him by taking away that grace which God gives him, and putting him in a way with which he himself is acquainted, but along which his penitents cannot go.

6. Seeing, then, that *prayer* is not *meditation* only, and that we cannot force our Lord (as the inexperienced think) always to make beginners meditate, and the more advanced to contemplate, and those who are perfect to love, but that as Lord, He bestows His graces as He pleases, and gives and takes away according to His own good pleasure; the director who is not master of this matter will greatly err by interfering with the Holy Spirit, not understanding or knowing His motions and ways.

7. We will lastly describe the ways which the same Christ our Lord taught a Religious who was His spouse, using the very words which He addressed

to her in a colloquy which she had with His Majesty, and which are those contained in the eighth colloquy, as they may there be read.

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## CHAPTER II.

OF PRAYER BY ACTS OF VIRTUE; HOW IT MUST BE PRACTISED.

FERVENT acts of the love of God are the principal stages of this way; he who has this talent of prayer, which of the six principal talents is the third, may portion out his life in the following manner.

2. Whenever the clock strikes, from the time he rises till the hour when he betakes himself to rest, he must make four acts of the *love of God*, in these words: *Fiat voluntas tua, Sanctissime Pater. Fiat voluntas tua, Sanctissime Fili. Fiat voluntas tua, Sanctissime Spiritus. Gloria Tibi, Sanctissima Trinitas* —“Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven, most Holy Father. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven, most Holy Son. Thy will be done, most Holy Spirit. Glory be to Thee, most Holy Trinity.”

3. In this way he will make more than sixty acts of the love of God every day, with no more trouble than a little care, and this same care must be the subject of a particular examen; thus he must pray for grace when he rises, in order not to fall into mortal

sin, and also that he may never at any hour omit these four acts ; should he however omit them, although it may not be wilfully but through press of occupation, or not having heard the clock strike, or through forgetfulness, let him make a cross on his heart to remind him of the number of times he has failed, remembering also that he must not on that account leave off the four acts. It will likewise be very important for him, not only to make this examen but also to habituate himself to recollect the striking of the clock. Together with the acts let him *quicken his desires not to displease our Lord during the following hour*, which will smooth whatever trouble and difficulty may occur in it.

4. The acts of religion, which are those of *praise, adoration, and thanksgiving to God*, must be performed at three fixed times. In the morning on arising, or before entering into prayer, the most Holy Trinity must be worshipped after the following manner: *Adoramus te, Sanctissime Pater, glorificamus te, gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam. Adoramus te, Sanctissime Fili, glorificamus te, gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam. Adoramus te, Sanctissime Spiritus, glorificamus te, gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam. Adoramus te, Sanctissima Trinitas, unus Deus, glorificamus te, gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam*—"We adore Thee, most Holy Father, we glorify Thee, we give Thee thanks for Thy great glory. We adore Thee, most Holy Son, we glorify Thee, we give Thee thanks for Thy great glory. We adore Thee, most Holy Spirit, we glorify Thee, we give Thee thanks for Thy

great glory. We adore Thee, most Holy Trinity, one God, we glorify Thee and give Thee thanks for Thy great glory."

The same formula must be repeated at noon, and a third time at night, and it must be used not only at these three fixed periods, but the habit must be acquired of repeating it very often ; when a visit is made to the most Blessed Sacrament, or when we pass before a crucifix, or whenever our devotion impels us to say it, nor must it be omitted even in seasons of spiritual aridity or in the midst of occupations.

5. For it must be borne in mind that the more arid, tempted, and lukewarm we are when making these acts, so much the greater is their value in the sight of God, and so much the more profitable and meritorious are they for the soul. For it is a sign that she rules and subdues the sensitive man, that she knows how to hold herself aloof from him, that she guides herself by reason, and that she is the mistress, that the sensitive part is her most humble slave ; also that she loves God and adores Him, and does not refrain from devotion, whether it be pleasant or the reverse, whether she be well disposed or the reverse.

6. The third class of acts are acts of *faith* ; by faith the believer is more certain that the three Persons of the most Holy Trinity are present within his soul than if he saw them with his bodily eyes ; nor does he require more light in order to offer supplication to this same Lord, or in order to love Him, adore Him, and commune with Him. Into these sacred



and dark profundities the understanding enters, being guided by faith itself, and holds commune with the Triune and One God, as if it were in the midst of light. By means of this same faith the soul assures itself that its God loves it, and that these same dark abysses in which He keeps it are but the depths of His love, and that He operates upon it as will be most for its spiritual profit. Anchored thus to this loving will, neither the floods nor the tempests of tribulation, nor the strokes of adversity, nor trials and afflictions, will have any power to make the soul drift away from the love and loyalty it owes to its Creator.

7. The fourth class of acts are acts of *hope*, founded on an unshaken belief in the immeasurable goodness of God our Lord, and they are the sole remedy to which the soul should have recourse when it falls into sin. This hope will raise it up again whenever it is humiliated, dismayed, and tempted. For it can overcome all its enemies by saying, "God is my Father," and persisting in saying so, as did the Prodigal Son who promised himself favour and a welcome from the father whom he had outraged. It must like him repeat his words which are these, *Ibo ad Patrem meum, et dicam ei, Pater, peccavi in cælum, et coram te*—"I will go to my Father, and say to Him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee." \*

By these means the faults which were the occasion of its fall and sorrow, will take to themselves wings and present themselves before God to entreat pardon

\* St. Luke xv. 18.

at His hands, and the soul will thereby be restored and strengthened. Let there be impressed upon the heart a knowledge and appreciation of the loving kindness of God, and not all the powers of hell will be able to take these words out of our mouth, *Bonus est Dominis sperantibus in illum. Bonum est præstolari cum silentio salutare Deo*—"The Lord is good to them that fear Him. It is good to wait with silence the salvation of God."\*

8. From these four kinds of acts which are the four great rivers flowing through Paradise, or the soul of the just man, stream forth an infinite number of rivulets of all the virtues, of *humility, poverty, patience, sorrow for sin, &c.*, which as so many celestial streams enter afterwards into the heart and make it fruitful.

9. And because this way of prayer, although it is direct and rich in virtues, is nevertheless very arid and solitary on account of no light being shed upon the understanding, seeing that it consists entirely of faith, it has seemed to me fitting to mention some affections which may soften its barrenness and accompany and entertain its solitude; these are accordingly given in the following chapter.

\* Lament. iii. 25, 26.

## CHAPTER III.

OF THE AFFECTIONS WHICH MAY BE ENKINDLED IN PRAYER.

AS a remedy for the dryness which accompanies all kinds of prayer, and especially that of making acts of virtue, and which causes many to turn back who have begun this holy exercise well, it is very important to be acquainted with the different affections which may be enkindled whereby to occupy the thoughts and feed the taste until light from Heaven returns. The principal of these affections are the following.

2. The first affection is admiration, or wonder, engendered by becoming acquainted with new and unthought-of things, as, for example, during meditation upon the Eucharist (and the same applies to any other mystery whatever), where matter for admiration and wonder will be found in the greatness of the gift that God bestows in this Sacrament, which surpasses all our understanding. Then, filled with astonishment, the soul exclaims, "What new wonder is this, my Lord? Can it be that God loves a vile creature so much that He gives him to eat of His own Body? Can it be that God dwells with men? That being clothed with glory in His Celestial Court—reverenced by His courtiers, adored and served by them, He should abase Himself and hide Himself that we may taste of His love, although He knows that such a favour will not be esteemed. Is it possible that the Man-God can bestow upon a creature so ungrateful a love so ardent, so pure, so

tender, so loyal, so constant? Is there no jewel of less value in His Heaven than the rich treasure which the Eternal Father bears in His bosom? To feed upon God! To have God for our food! Ah, new and wondrous feast! Are not these the bowels of tenderness of a mother who yearns after her own flesh and blood, to sustain the life and satisfy the hunger and thirst of her children? I marvel at myself, O Lord, that such love and such gifts as these are not sufficient to melt my heart of stone, for if they are powerful enough to crush rocks into pieces, how is it that my heart also is not broken? And seeing that even wild beasts are tamed by kindness, how much more savage and harder of heart must I be than they, if Thy love does not soften my heart!"

3. After this manner the mind may be so occupied and enkindled that it may spend a long space of time with profit and enjoyment to itself, the soul being meanwhile given up to emotions of wonder and admiration, and filled with an immeasurable sense of the goodness of God, of His love, and of His patience, together with a knowledge of its own misery, of its own vileness by nature, and of the blindness of its understanding.

4. The second affection is that of confusion and sorrow for sin, whereby, looking at this self-same mystery, I behold what God is and what I am; in what manner His Majesty deals with me, how liberally, how generously; what a Father He shows Himself to be, and how I, on the other hand, deal with God, how ungrateful I am, how ready to grieve Him, how rebellious and how averse from things

which are pleasing to Him. Then, filled with confusion, I confess my injustice, and lay open my wounds to Him, and lament that I have offended Him, with a sorrow that penetrates into the heart. I also see clearly how merciful the Lord has been, in not permitting me to be lost for ever, but giving me time to repent and to see the enormity of my sins before it is too late. Here, likewise, is laid the foundation stone of the spiritual building, when the soul is made to know this truth which proceeds from God, namely, that it has not received the sorrows and chastisements it merits, and on the other hand, it has received more blessings and favours than it merits.

5. For the purpose of nourishing so profitable an affection as this, recourse must be had to the Sacred Scriptures, to the sayings of the Saints, to spiritual books, &c., and from them must be selected such words as have relation to the above mentioned affections, such as those of the thirty-seventh Psalm, fourth verse—*Non est sanitas in carne mea a facie iræ tuæ, non est pax ossibus meis a facie peccatorum meorum. Quoniam iniquitates meæ supergressæ sunt caput meum, et quasi onus grave gravatæ sunt super me. Putruerunt et corruptæ sunt cicatrices meæ, a facie insipientiæ meæ. Miser factus sum, et curvatus sum usque in finem—*“There is no health in my flesh because of Thy wrath, there is no peace for my bones because of my sins. For my iniquities are gone over my head, and as a heavy burden are become weary upon me. My sores are putrified and corrupted because of my foolishness. I am become miserable, and am bowed down even to the end.”

6. Many appropriate verses may be taken from the *Miserere*, and from the Prayer of Manasses, and from holy Job, and wherever the soul feels itself inspired with the greatest emotion it should repeat the passage again and again. For example, at that verse—*Tibi solo peccavi et malum coram te peccavi*, or only, *malum coram te feci*—"Have mercy on me, O God, because to Thee only have I sinned, and have done evil before Thee." And the soul should dwell again and again upon, and consider deeply the *contra te*—against Thee. Against Thee, my Eternal Father, from Whom I have my body and soul, Whose are the heavens, the light, and the elements. Against Thee, God the Son, Who didst abase Thyself and come down from Heaven for the love of me, Who didst shed Thy Blood for my eternal salvation, Who dost give Thyself to me as food wherewith to sustain my life. Against Thee, Holy Spirit, Who didst sanctify me in Baptism, Who dost pardon my sins, and impress me with so many heavenly thoughts, and enrich me with Thy gifts. Who has ever treated his benefactor with ingratitude, if it be not myself? From these reflections spring a great desire to offer satisfaction to God, and to perform penance, seeing that it is impossible to pay the infinite debt which the soul has incurred.

7. The third affection is that of supplication, which is the best known and the most powerful means for obtaining great favours, provided that it is inspired by confidence and continued with perseverance. Let such examples as that of the Canaanite woman, which signifies the soul, and her daughter, which signifies sensuality, be imitated. For she said—*Domine, filia*:

*mea a dæmonio vexatur*—"Lord, my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil,"\* and although God was silent four, six, nay, twelve years, she persisted in presenting herself before Him, and in spite of worldly cares, distractions, occupations, dryness, sickness, temptations, persevered in coming to Him until she deserved to hear the words, *O mulier, magna est fides tua*—"O woman, great is thy faith." Let us also repeat the prayer of holy Job, "Nothing but lips are left about my teeth: How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me know my crimes and offences."

8. From the third chapter of Daniel may be taken the prayer offered by the Three Children in the furnace of blazing fire, *Ne confundas nos sed fac nobiscum juxta mansuetudinem tuam, et secundum multitudinem misericordiæ tuæ, erue nos in mirabilibus tuis, et da gloriam nomini tuo*—"Put us not to confusion, but deal with us according to Thy meekness, and according to the multitude of Thy mercies, and deliver us according to Thy wonderful works, and give glory to Thy name, O Lord."† The wrestle of Jacob with the Angel is said by Osee to have been weeping and supplication. "He prevailed over the Angel and was strengthened, he wept and made supplication to him,"‡ and by means of it he conquered. In the Psalms of David there are a great number of supplications. Those calculated to give most satisfaction to the soul are the ones with which he was inspired by the Holy Spirit, and which were taught him by his own necessities.

\* St. Matt. xv. 22.    † Dan. iii. 42, 43.    ‡ Osee xii.

9. The fourth affection is that of arguments, which may be used through the permission God gives us when He says, *Venite et arguite me, dicit Dominus*—"Come and accuse Me, saith the Lord."\* It is true that when we accuse God, we have not wherewith to answer Him, but no sooner is the soul conquered than it will immediately be at peace, and its arguments will have been abundantly successful.

10. The first method of argument must be taken from the blood and merits of Jesus Christ, and must be applied in this manner, "I do not deny, O Lord, that I have offended Thee, that I deserve to be cast into darkness, but may not my sins be put in comparison with the infinite merits of Jesus Christ? Place then, O my God, my sins (for of a truth I merit Thy anger) in the balance of the Cross, and it will be seen how much more heavily the death and Passion of Jesus Christ weigh than they do. Will Thy Majesty, in order to chastise thy treacherous slave, forget the prayers, the anguish, the blood, and the death of Thy Son? If not, I will take refuge under the shadow of the Cross, and should He give to my sins more weight than to His goodness, as He did in the case of Cain, still I will say, greater is Thy mercy than my sins. If Thy Majesty, O my Lord, will not receive the Blood of Thy Lamb in payment of my debts, what shall I, a miserable sinner, do? Whither shall I flee? Where shall I find a remedy?"

11. The second is to argue from the mercy of God to my wretchedness. "If, Lord, Thy mercy look for miseries to remedy, in order to reveal the treasures of

\* Isaias i. 18.



Thy loving kindness, who is there more wretched than I, seeing that I am misery itself? Nay, I may even implore mercy at the hands of justice, seeing that miseries have laid hold on my body and my soul."

12. The third method is to argue from His power to His desire. "Thou canst do, O my God, all that Thou wilt, and I cannot but cling to this argument, for if I could do to myself that which Thy own will can perform, then from this moment I would desire to be entirely Thine, and to deliver up to Thee my body and my soul, so that all my powers should be Thine. What is there I have said, which Thou dost not also desire? I cannot express it, but I know that Thou desirest it, even more than I do myself. Therefore, break Thou, O Lord, through my lukewarmness and aridities, and make a way for Thy mercies, as Thou art wont to do with Thy chosen."

13. The fourth method is to argue with His own inclination to do good to all men. "My King and my Lord, I do not come to ask for justice, but for mercy. And art Thou not called Blessed, because Thou dost good to those who cannot repay Thee? Why does Thy Majesty draw forth Thy purse to succour the poor man? And wherefore are the treasures of Thy light and Thy fire expended but in order to enkindle this coal?" After this manner, reasons must be invented, whereby to constrain Him to give the especial succour of which I stand in need.

14. The fifth affection is compassion towards oneself, by which the soul is moved to lament over its own miseries, and to look at itself as Jeremias looked at Jerusalem besieged, and to see how its enemies, that

is to say its sensual appetites, keep it in subjection, without resource and without strength. Then, full of unction, it will exclaim with the self-same Prophet, in his Lamentations, *Ego vir videns paupertatem meam in virga indignationis ejus. Quomodo obtexit caligine in furore suo Dominus filiam Sion; projecit de cælo in terram inclitam Israel, et non est recordatus scabellum pedum suorum. Replevit me amaritudinibus, inebriavit me absynthio*—"I am the man that see my poverty by the rod of his indignation. The Lord hath covered with obscurity the daughter of Sion in His wrath, He hath cast down from Heaven to the earth the glorious one of Israel in the day of His wrath, and hath not remembered his footstool in the day of His anger. He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath inebriated me with wormwood."\*

15. Some application must be made to oneself of each passage, and of the lamentations contained in such words, as the following; for example, when all the ways of access to God are closed, such as prayer, examination, spiritual reading, communions, &c., we must say, *Conclussit vias meas lapidibus quadris, semitas meas subvertit, et circumædificavit adversum me, ut non egrediar, aggravavit compedem meum*—"He hath shut up my paths with square stones, He hath turned my steps upside down, He hath built me round about that I may not get out, He hath made my fetters heavy."† And when we can obtain nothing in answer to our supplications, we must say, *Sed et cum clamavero, et rogavero, exclusit orationem meam*—"Yea, when I cry and entreat

\* Lament. iii. 7; ii. 7; iii. 15.

† Lament. iii. 9, 7.

He hath shut out my prayer.”\* In this manner we must make use of words which excite the most devotion, as well in the Lamentations as in holy Job.

16. The sixth affection is that of curiosity, whereby the soul desires to know from our Lord things to which its own limited knowledge cannot attain, and to this affection belong the interior communings with His Majesty, as to what ought to be done in doubtful cases in order to obtain a good result. We should then repeat over and over again what St. Paul said to Him, *Domine quid me vis facere?*—“Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”† When it is not clear what it is that troubles the soul and the spirit, we must say to Him, *Quid faciam tibi, o custos hominum? indica mihi cur me ita judices*—“What shall I do to Thee, O keeper of men? tell me why Thou judgest me so.”‡

In like manner we must say, as Delilah did to Samson, *Quo modo dicis, quod amas me? Ostende quo vinciri debeas*—“How dost thou say thou lovest me? Show me wherewith thou mayest be bound.”§ What, O Lord, did the souls so dear to Thee do, which bound them so fast to Thy heart? Wherein consists the wickedness of my heart; which makes it withdraw itself from Thee? In order to afford aliment to this affection, make use of the words of holy Job, *Responde mihi, quantas habeo iniquitates et peccata, scelera mea et delicta mea ostende mihi. Cur faciam tuam abscondis, et arbitraris me inimicum tuum?*—“Answer me, how many are my iniquities and sins, make me know my crimes and offences. Why hidest Thou Thy face,

\* Lament. iii. 8.    † Acts ix. 6.    ‡ Job vii. 20; x. 2.

§ Judges xvi. 15, 13.

and thinkest me Thy enemy?"\* By means of these prayers the Lord is moved to reveal to a soul its wretchedness, and the obstacles which prevent it from receiving light and graces.

17. The seventh affection is that of complaints. The best are those which the soul pours forth to the Lord against itself, lamenting the bad use it makes of its liberty, which is all the possession it has, and which it employs in loving the lowest creatures, and forsaking its infinite good, to whom it owes all its love, and uttering such words as these, *Dimittam adversum me eloquium meum, loquar in amaritudine animæ meæ*—"I will speak in the affliction of my spirit, I will talk with the bitterness of my soul."† I ought not, O Lord, to complain of my sensuality, for I see Thou hast placed it in the power of my free will; nor of demons, for I know well that they can do nothing more than bark like dogs, and then only by Thy permission; nor against temptations which are not owing to my own fault. Against myself, O Lord, against my iniquity I make my complaint, that seeing and knowing Thy Majesty is my whole good, I forsake it and barter it for that which defiles and betrays me, abhorring my life and condemning myself to death.

18. The soul must also make other like complaints to God, of being the slave of sensuality, which greatly persecutes and oppresses it, as Jezebel did Elias, and brings it to the point of death, and then say, *Filia Babylonis misera, beatus qui tenebit et allidet tuos ad petram*—"Daughter of Babylon, miserable,

\* Job xiii. 23.

† Job vii. 11.

blessed shall he be who shall take and cast thy little ones,"\* thy children, which are thy appetites, against the rock of Christ Crucified. Then exclaim with St. Paul, *Infelix homo, quis me liberabit de corpore mortis hujus?*—"Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"† And with Elias, entreat of Him that thou mayest be delivered from the body of flesh.

19. Our Lord permits us to make other complaints to Him for absenting Himself so frequently from us, for His so great tardiness in returning, and for withholding so often from us the stream of His mercy. Of this our Lady complained when she said, "Son, why hast Thou done so to us?" And also St. Anthony, when he said, "Where wast Thou, my Lord, that Thou didst permit me thus to suffer?" The words of Isaïas have reference to this affection when he exclaims, *Multitudo viscerum tuorum, et miserationum tuarum? super me continuerunt se. Quare errare nos fecisti Domine a viis tuis?*—"Where are the multitude of Thy bowels and of Thy mercies? they have held back themselves from me. Why hast Thou made us to err, O Lord, from Thy ways."‡ Nor can I cease, my Father, from addressing Thee in the words of Thy Prophet, when he complains, *Omnis plaga tumens, non est circumligata, nequa fota oleo, neque curata medicamine*—"Wounds and bruises and swelling sores; they are not bound up, nor dressed, nor fomented with oil."§

Is it possible that a poor weak blind creature like I am, should be the object of the anger of so compas-

\* Psalm cxxxvi. 8, 9. † Rom. vii. 24. ‡ Isaïas lxiii. 15.

§ Isaïas i. 6.

sionate and merciful a God? That Thou shouldst drive a miserable sinner with so much indignation from Thy presence; that Thou shouldst permit my hungry, sick, and wretched soul to remain so many years before Thy gate?

20. By these and other arguments and affections, the soul may importune the divine mercy to receive it, and bestow upon it a remedy for all its ills, reminding His Majesty of the manner in which the pitiful Samaritan aided the wayfarer who was wounded and robbed of all his goods, and lamenting that His Majesty should suffer for it every day in Holy Communion, and that seeing it robbed and wounded He should not cure its infirmities, *neque infundat oleum et vinum*—that He should not heal it with the oil of His mercy and the wine of His sorrow.

21. The eighth affection is that of praise, which greatly kindles the love of God in us, and in which our Lord greatly delights, as He says by David, *Sacrificium laudis honorificabit me*—"The sacrifice of praise shall glorify me,"\* and again, *Redemus vinculos labiorum nostrorum*—"We will render the calves of our lips."†

There is no sacrifice more frequent than this, therefore the soul must offer it very frequently, nor is it requisite to use any particular form of words, since the Psalms of David, the Song of Solomon, the Canticles in Holy Scripture, the hymns of the Church are all of them suitable. Those which are most full of love and tenderness may be chosen, and varied from time to time so as to avoid weariness by too

\* Psalm xlix. 23.

† Osee xiv. 3.

frequent repetition, and then will be fulfilled the command of the Apostle, *Cantantes in cordibus vestris Domino in hymnis et canticis spiritualibus*—"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual canticles, making melody in your hearts to the Lord."\* Those which ought to be used most constantly are *Benedictio et charitas, et sapientia, honor, virtus, et fortitudo, Deo nostro in sæcula sæculorum, Amen; Gloria in excelsis Deo, etc.; Omnis terra adoret te et psallat tibi; Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth, pleni sunt cæli majestatis gloriæ tuæ*—"Blessing and honour and wisdom and strength and glory and power, be to our God for ever and ever, Amen; Glory be to God on high, &c. ; Let all the earth adore and worship Thee; Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory."

22. The ninth affection is that of fear, which begins with servile fear and ends with filial fear. The motives of servile fear are the three last things, death, judgment, hell, and the anger of God against obstinate sinners. This holy fear is as a spur to constrain us to keep the commandments, for many who wish to act rightly are more moved thereto by the fear of punishment and the hope of reward than by any other higher motives; the soul moreover is fortified by the remembrance of sudden death, of the final sentence, and the lively apprehension of eternity and of the pains of hell. In proportion as it learns to know and love God, it divests itself of servile fear and clothes itself with that which is filial, and then the soul fears an injury offered to God as though it were done to itself, and fears it

\* Ephes. v. 19.

more than the pains of hell. This noble fear springs from the love of God, and it is that which makes the powers of Heaven tremble when His infinite Majesty is insulted.

23. The tenth affection is that of love ; this affection has more power than any other in smoothing all that is rough and difficult in the way of virtue. It rests on three powerful motives. The first is the beauty of God, with all His divine perfections. The second, His benefits which cannot be numbered or understood. The third and most powerful, the love which His Majesty bears us without any merit of our own.

24. Each one of these motives may kindle burning affection, in the glow of which the soul is sweetly inflamed by the love of its Creator ; because, even if He were not so great a Benefactor, nor so enamoured of our soul, His infinite beauty would alone be sufficient to cast down rocks and burn them up in His love. Each one of us meditating thus upon the immeasurable chain of benefits by which he is bound to a Lord so worthy to be loved for His own sake, will have no difficulty in resigning all to the will of Him Who so richly merits the offering, and Who has been so bountiful to us. Associating with this the consideration of the love which God bears to us, so ardent, so constant, and so disinterested, in spite of the poor return we make ; these three motives will become very powerful in kindling the love of God in the coldest, proudest, and most ungrateful of hearts, and enabling it to become dead in God and to transform itself entirely into His divine will.



With this loving and tender affection the Cantic of Canticles overflows in every one of its words, which I do not quote here, for the whole book contains nothing else.

25. The eleventh affection is confidence in God, which is very full of profit, because in proportion as it expands and enlarges itself, and trusts in the Lord that He will give all that the soul asks of Him, will be the amount which it receives. In order to excite this affection in the manner which is due, the soul must know and understand the sweetness and liberality of the Lord, and the satisfaction that it gives Him that His children should constrain Him by their importunities, and that they should look upon themselves as His most dear children. It must likewise know and understand that His Majesty has no need of it for anything, except to bestow benefits upon it, and therefore that He will not deny anything which will be profitable for it. Armed with this certainty, Moses presented himself boldly before God to entreat pardon for his sinful people ; and so confident was he that he said—"Either pardon them this trespass or strike me out of the book that Thou hast written."

26. The resignation which we owe to the will of God is not opposed to this affection, which always supposes the condition, that it be His will and for His greater glory ; on the contrary, it adds force to the petition of the soul, which as it presents itself before God solely to entreat the reparation of His honour, the manifestation of His power, and the increase of His glory, need not have any fear or doubt that He will deny it what it asks.

27. The twelfth affection is that of thanksgiving, a debt strictly due to God, and which His Majesty requires of all without exception, because mere creatures such as we are, having nothing wherewith we can repay such an infinity of benefits, except by recognizing and confessing them, and proclaiming the goodness and liberality of Him from Whom we receive them, it would indeed be a heinous crime, of which even cold hearts are guiltless, not to give thanks to Him for them. Call to memory, then, the many benefits we have received and which we continue daily to receive, and especially in having been delivered from the powers of darkness, and from the tyranny of our passions, in having been forgiven so many debts, and so many injuries that should have been forgotten. Bearing in mind all these things, we shall be always offering up perpetual thanksgiving, as the Apostle says—*Semper in gratiarum actione maneamus*. Then by means of this affection the Lord will redouble His mercies and continue those we have received, whilst the ungrateful man will render himself unworthy of all these benefits.

28. These are the principal affections; I have exemplified them, not in order that the very words I have given should be used, but to show what things may be done in order that we may rightly esteem them when our Lord gives them to us in prayer, and that we may ponder over them, remembering that the end of meditation is to excite ourselves to virtue by the exercise of different affections. Tender piety is of great avail towards the preservation and augmentation of these affections, because they incline

the sensitive portion of our nature to heavenly things and to heavenly persons, as well divine as angelic and human. In seasons of obscurity and of absence from God they are also very helpful in enabling us to pass through them with less desolation.

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## CHAPTER IV.

OF TENDER DEVOTIONS WHICH ARE A GREAT HELP  
TO THE SPIRIT.

**W**HENEVER a soul finds no pleasure in God, nor any consolation in prayer, it is very necessary for it to have recourse to some tender devotions that it may occupy itself with them and not tire of waiting for the season of light, and also that it may not separate itself so far from His Majesty that it may not afterwards be able, when it desires to do so, to return to its first and spiritual principles.

2. The devotions which bring us nearest to God are greatest in value ; thus during Mass the soul may receive spiritual communion every day, and this is a most solid devotion. In order to make it with the utmost purity, at the moment when the *Agnus Dei* is said we must recall to mind the sins of the past day, confess them to our Lord, and beg of Him pardon and penitence by an act of contrition. And at the moment when the Priest is receiving, we must communicate spiritually with the greatest fervour and desire of which we are capable ; that is to say,

we must ardently desire to receive our Lord, and as though we had really received Him, we must give Him thanks until Mass is over. If the person doing this be a Religious, he may every day renew his vows by this affection, desiring they should be of as much avail at that time as though he had never made them before ; in this way he doubles every day the merit of this heroic act. These three devotions, which require nothing more than a little care, preserve life in the soul, and increase its growth without its being sensible of it, so that it takes more and more pleasure in the things pertaining to God.

3. It is a very pleasing devotion to the Holy Trinity to adore It three times every day, that is to say, in the morning, at noon, and at night, in the same words as are given in the acts of the virtues, *Adoramus te, glorificamus te, gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam*—"We adore Thee, we glorify Thee, we give Thee thanks for Thy great glory," addressing them first to the Father, then to the Son, then to the Holy Ghost, and then to the Blessed Trinity, conjointly.

4. There are many loving devotions which may be addressed to the Holy Ghost. The hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*, and the verse *Veni Sancte Spiritus* may be learnt by heart, and repeated every day. From the Resurrection down to Pentecost, the soul should dispose itself to receive Him with great desire and purity, frequenting the Sacraments and keeping the senses in a state of recollection, for this divine fire bestows itself in great abundance on those who have greatly sighed after it, and desired its coming.

5. Devotion to our Lady sheds floods of light upon the soul, because by this Gate of Heaven the Sun enters into the heart. We owe two kinds of affection to the Blessed Virgin, the first is called *diffusive*, because it spreads itself through all the affections and actions of the soul, and inspires it to give to her not only all that it possesses, but itself also. In order to accomplish these loving ends, the soul should determine to give itself up once for all to her as her spouse, and perceiving the necessity which this poor Queen had of service during her six years of exile in Egypt, it will offer herself to be her servant, making a declaration of servitude, signing it and delivering itself and all its possessions into her hands, to deal with according to her good pleasure, in which there is greater gain than can be told in words. The form of the declaration will be as follows.

*Declaration.*

6. "Let all who read this Declaration witness that I, . . . , give myself to be the perpetual slave of the Virgin Mary our Lady, with the pure, free, and perfect donation of my person and my property, that she may dispose of me and it according to her good pleasure as my true and real Mistress. And since I am unworthy of this favour, I pray my holy Angel Guardian, St. Joseph, St. Joachim, St. Anne, &c., to obtain from the Virgin Mary that she will receive me among the number of her servants. And I affirm and certify the truth of this Declaration at . . . . .

*(Here the name must be signed)*

7. By means of this declaration the new slave enters into the household and becomes the servant of that Blessed Lady who looks upon all her family as sons, and joyfully nourishes them, and shelters and shields them in all their trials and temptations. But it must be remembered that this is merely a promise which is not binding under sin if it should be broken; although if it be not retracted, all our good works, whether of penance or devotion, remain at the disposition of our Lady, who uses them to the greater glory of God, whereby she benefits her servants in no small degree, and fulfils their obligations without their being aware of it.

8. The other is called the *unitive* affection, which inspires the soul with great love and great power of uniting itself wholly with the will and good pleasure of the Blessed Virgin; enabling it to submit all its desires to the desire of our Lady, in which it has an inestimable possession. Profiting by this, it takes concert with the Blessed Virgin that seeing whilst we are on earth we are guilty of leaving and forgetting God, our will is to love, adore, and praise our Lord as our Lady herself adores and praises Him in Heaven, and our desire is to give Him the same glory she does. And this affection, by which we unite and associate ourselves with the Blessed Virgin, must be often renewed, because our small possessions are thereby greatly increased.

9. By means of this self-same love we are able to profit by all the merits, graces, and privileges of our Blessed Lady, as having the same claim upon her which a son has on his mother. Thus when we are

about to communicate, and feel ourselves to be unworthy of so great a Guest, we must supplicate our Lady to lend us her pearls, her adornments, and her homage, at least during the time that the King shall enter our stable, and to offer to her Son all her merits, wherewith to cover the poverty of so wretched a dwelling-place. St. Gertrude, when she did this, learnt from Christ our Lord that the Blessed Virgin had lent her own merits to her, and that it had been well pleasing to Him.

10. These affections of love are pleasing to the Blessed Virgin in her purity, holiness, and humility, and enable us to approach her with the same confidence that a little child shows to its mother, from whom he asks all that he desires with great confidence, as if it were due to him, and to whom he has recourse in all his tribulations, while the good mother on her part feels herself bound to comply with his wishes, and even to give him more than he asks. And if earthly mothers, although they are sinners, love in such sort as this, will not the Mother of God, who is full of willingness and sweetness, receive her sons who have recourse to her as to their Mother?

11. Imitating then the confidence and security of children, who in this respect are our masters, we must bring to our Mother the Blessed Virgin all our temptations, infirmities, dangers, aridities, as well as our joys and our consolations, that she may defend us from demons, may heal us, prove us, counsel and guide us in all our ways; and if we do this, then experience will teach us that the Queen of Heaven is Mother also of the slaves who serve her as children.

12. From these two affections, as from a fountain, spring a thousand streams of tenderness and of signs of love, which are looked upon with great contempt by the proud and the learned, as being trifles and absurd baubles, because of their ignorance of the things of God. One of these is to wear a rosary round the neck, as typical of being enchained to the Blessed Virgin, as a testimony of slavery to her, and in memory of the love she bears us. Another thing is to recite nine *Ave Marias*, in reverence of the nine months that the Son of God was in her womb, associating ourselves in the joy which she experienced, and begging of her to obtain for us perseverance in the favour of God until death, as well as perseverance in the slavery which we profess to her. Another is to carry about with us a picture of her, or a medal, and often to address it, as though we were speaking with the Blessed Virgin herself. But as we cannot of ourselves address her in befitting language, we must take words wherewith to salute her out of her own hymns, such as *Monstra te esse matrem, etc.*; *Gloria tibi, Domine, qui natus est de Virgine, etc.*; *O gloriosa Domina, etc.*; *Sub tuum præsidium confugimus, etc.*; *Maria, mater gratiæ, etc.*; with other like verses and tender words which love alone can teach, and the effect of which is to kindle in the heart the love of God and to render the way of perfection easy and sweet.

13. But since we have many enemies, very valiant, very skilful, ever on the watch for our perdition, and who will strive to hinder these devotions, these pious thoughts, and these our daily prayers, it is



very requisite that we should take up arms against them in order that, not being vanquished either by the tedium of battle nor by fear of the contest, we may not quit the way on which we have entered.

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## CHAPTER V.

### WEAPONS AGAINST TEMPTATIONS.

THE life of man, as holy Job tells us, is a war, waged against us by enemies whom we cannot see though they can see us, which gives them no small advantage, and who will overcome us if we are not continually on the watch, who sleep not, neither do they eat, who are never weary or slack, and who never give truce. This being the case, for a Christian, who is a soldier of Christ, to go forth and meet these enemies without any arms, is to subject himself to be killed by them; and thus to despise the life of the soul would indeed be an act of madness, seeing how inestimable is its value. Therefore they are justly to be regarded as fools who, unprovided with armour and weapons, or advice from their captain and spiritual guides, presume to go and do battle with practised and skilful enemies. In order to avoid this danger, and that the battle may not be lost for want of arms, I have collected the following weapons.

2. The first is, to be certain that we shall have to encounter temptation, and to be always on our guard and prepared in a time of peace, that the enemy may

not fall upon us unawares, which is just what it is his desire to do, and that he may throw us off our guard, and make us fancy we are always to enjoy peace. This is the counsel of Ecclesiasticus, "Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation."\*

3. The second and a most useful weapon is, for each one of us to bind himself to make an act of love to God when he perceives that he is entering into temptation. Whether it be one of impurity, or pride, or blasphemy, or scruple, or any other like suggestion of the devil, and to laugh at him, saying, "Thou shalt be of some use since thou hast come to my house; I will make thee rouse me to love of our Lord." For this reason, St. Paul called him a spur or a goad, and thus the very weapon which the devil bears for our destruction, is converted into an instrument for the life and profit of the soul. And the demons are frightened, and are afraid of coming to tempt us, seeing themselves forced as they are, with such avidity, to be awakeners of the soul which had become drowsy in the love of God. Moreover, by means of this excellent practice, an important advantage is obtained, namely, that of distracting the soul from the contemplation of the sinful imagination with which Satan had desired to keep it bound and absorbed, and enabling it to flee to God, which is a sweet and an efficacious means for obtaining the victory. For it is better to withdraw from the place where the artillery is placed ready pointed, than not to be able to offer resistance with fitting means of

\* Ecclus. ii.

defence, seeing that we may perchance be seized with a panic, or attacked unexpectedly, and sometime placed in peril.

4. We may also shelter ourselves beneath acts of love to God, such as, *Fiat voluntas tua; Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam; Adveniat regnum tuum; Gloria tibi Domine, qui natus est de Virgine; Omnis terra adorat te et psallat tibi*—"Thy will be done; Glory be to God on high; We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory; Thy kingdom come; Glory to Thee, O Lord, Who art born of a Virgin; All the earth adores and sings praise to Thee;" with other like acts. The first of these acts we should learn to say without delay, when the temptation falls upon us suddenly, and when it persists then we must go on and say the other acts, as if we had already overcome the temptation. But as this dog will not cease to bite us, we must not cease to fight him, to prevail against him and destroy him.

5. The third is to have a tender love for our Lady, to have such confidence in her as a son places in his mother, and to such a degree that it should seem impossible to us that she would permit us to be conquered or to die in the battle. This devotion to the Blessed Virgin was the dew which fell upon the three youths in the furnace of Babylon, defending them from the fire, recreating them and bringing them forth so unhurt and whole that the flames within afflicted them not nor did them any harm. Therefore, on perceiving the demon, like a kite, about to swoop down upon us, let us fly like chicken beneath the

wings of our Mother the Virgin, and having first made an act of the love of God, if the temptation does not cease, let us make use of these words, *Monstra te esse matrem. Sub tuum præsidium confugimus, Sancta Dei genitrix. Maria, mater gratiæ, mater misericordiæ, tu nos ab hoste protege*—"Show thyself a Mother! We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God. Mary, Mother of grace, Mother of mercy, protect us from our enemies, &c.;" with other like words which we shall find in the Office of our Lady.

6. The fourth weapon is that of St. Paul, "Faithful is God, Who will not permit us to be tempted above what we are able to bear." And not only this, but, if with one hand He permits the temptation, and with the other He gives us strength to resist, we ought to correspond with His Majesty when the temptation is sharpest, by giving Him grateful thanks that He allows us to bear so small a morsel of His woes, conforming ourselves to His most holy will; and seeing what end God has in view in thus allowing us to be tempted, which is to force us by means of trials to come to His arms, to beg of Him succour, and to make experience of what we possess in God.

7. The fifth arm is the remembrance of the four last things, in conformity with the command, "Remember thy latter days, and thou shalt not sin." It is a very powerful weapon against the filthy pleasures of the flesh, against the lying glory of the world, and against the insatiable thirst after riches. For each latter thing there is an appropriate text, as for instance, with regard to death, "O death, how bitter is thy memory to the man who puts his trust

in his riches." Another has respect to the judgment, *Ite maledicti in ignem æternum*—"Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire," which is the sentence of the final judgment against the wicked. Another has reference to hell, *In inferno nulla est redemptio*. Since, however, the tempter may succeed in making us forget all these truths, hiding them from our eyes in the time of battle, by means of the fire and smoke and noise of his artillery, it is necessary to meditate upon them continually during the time of truce, in order that the heart may bring them to our remembrance.

8. The sixth weapon is to humble ourselves at once, remembering that we are worthy, not only of the trial we are suffering, but of others still greater. Let us, therefore, say with the good thief, *Nos quidem juste, nam digna factis recipimus*—"We indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds."\* Of a truth, Lord, we are justly visited by this temptation, and our sins well deserve it. For the sake of such humble words as these, Christ received him on the Cross, and He will receive us likewise if we do not allow ourselves to fall under temptation. The words of the Publican are also very applicable, *Domine, propitius esto mihi peccatori*—"Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." The strength of this weapon consists in this, that as pride is the foundation of all haughty or sensual thoughts, so any act whatever of humility turns aside its current and checks the enemy, because, strictly speaking, temptations are a burden with which God permits the heart to be laden, in order that it may be overwhelmed by misery, and seek relief from Him.

\* St. Luke xxiii. 41.

9. The seventh weapon is the memory of the benefits of God, and it is one which exercises great power over a noble heart, making it feel it to be impossible to consent to sin against a benefactor so great as God, making it to say to the demon what Joseph said to his mistress when she tempted him to sin, *Quomodo possum malum hoc facere*—"How can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?"\* How can I sin against my Father, my Creator, my Redeemer, my Preserver? &c.

10. The eighth, to guard ourselves against occasions of sin, for prudence is a very powerful weapon in regard to that which springs from a knowledge of oneself and of our vileness and wretchedness, which is light and truth, whilst to rush into temptation is to have a vain confidence in ourselves and to go into darkness, and then our fate is certain, as it is written, *Qui amat periculum, in illo peribit*—"He that loveth danger, shall perish in it."†

11. The ninth, not to look upon temptations as chastisements, which they are not always, and when they are, to look upon them as blessings, because by means of them we are constrained to have recourse to the Lord, and to entreat help from Him, and to recognize our danger, to perform penance, and to be aware that we live among enemies, with a thousand other benefits which the Lord knows how to draw from temptation. On which account the Holy Spirit says, "He who is not tempted, what does he know?" The Saints were tempted, and the holiest, Christ our Lord, and He sends temptations to the just for the

\* Gen. xxxix. 9.

† Ecclus. iii. 27.

sake of the love He bears them. St. Raphael said to Tobias, *Quoniam acceptus eras Deo, necesse fuit ut tentatio probaret te*—"Because thou wert acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee."\* To St. Paul He gave the thorn in the flesh to purify the virtue of the Apostle, after having raised him to the third Heaven; and therefore we must look upon temptations as favours, and rejoice in them as St. James commands, *Omne gaudium existimate, fratres mei, cum in tentationes varias incideritis*—"Count it all joy when you shall fall into divers temptations."†

12. The tenth, is to inform our spiritual directors of our temptations, for wonderful and instantaneous effects result from this act of humility, and our Lord so greatly esteems the effort we make when we speak of them to His minister, that His Majesty immediately charges Himself with our defence. And as the devil is well aware of this, he employs all the forces and stratagems he has at his command to hinder us from doing this, because, when he is left alone with the soul, although it be well practised in such conflicts, he has great power, but when it is aided by the counsel and the weapons of its spiritual guide it conquers its enemy. Therefore the Holy Spirit says, *Vae soli, quia cum ceciderit, non habet sublevantem se*—"Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth he hath none to raise him up."‡

13. The eleventh, is the general one of prayer and mortification of the passions, which Christ joined together when He said, *Hoc genus dæmoniorum non*

\* Tobias xii. 1.

† St. James i. 2.

‡ Eccles. iv. 10.

*ejicitur nisi in oratione et jejunio*—"This kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting."\* By fasting is understood all kinds of penance; and a short time given to prayer every day is a means of continually arming ourselves with light and strength for the never-ceasing fight. From prayer also springs the desire to mortify the passions, and by mortification temptations are conquered.

14. The twelfth is an offensive weapon. All the words of Holy Scripture which are most insulting to the devil, and which make the greatest mock at him, must be recalled to memory. I will select a few together here, and they will serve as examples of the others, of which those who love to fight with these dragons must make use, and we must bear in mind that we ought not to have any fear of them, but to treat them as having the empire over them, since we attack them in the name of Christ, our Captain and King. We must also hold it as certain that these dogs are not able to do a single thing more than they are permitted by our Lord.

15. The first insult and stone of offence is the battle with St. Michael, when the dragon pretended to be as God, and would not adore Christ, nor receive Him as his King, and when St. Michael conquered him, saying, *Quis sicut Deus?* and cast him down into hell. As soon as we feel him tempting the imagination with dulness, vanities, and desires of vengeance, we must say to him, *Quis sicut Deus?* which is tantamount to rebuking him as a vain brawler, and it vexes him and hurts him greatly as soon as ever he hears it.

\* St. Mark ix. 27.



16. The second is the passage in which Lucifer is mocked at, and when Isaias says to him, *Quomodo cecidisti de cœlo lucifer, qui mane oriebaris? Qui dicebas in corde tuo, in cœlum conscendam; in infernum detraheris, in profundum laci; detracta est superbia tua usque ad inferos*—"How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning? And thou saidst, I will ascend into Heaven; but yet thou shalt be brought down into hell, into the depths of the pit."\*

17. The third is the severity with which Ezechiel reproaches him when he says, *Tu signaculum similitudinis, plenus sapientia, et perfectus decore; in deliciis paradisi Dei fuisti, omnis lapis pretiosus operimentum tuum*; and then, *In medio lapidum ignitorum ambulasti; perfectus in viis tuis a die conditionis tuæ, donec inventa est iniquitas in te; repleta sunt interiora tua iniquitate; perdidisti sapientiam tuam in decore tuo, etc.; producam ergo ignem de medio tui*—"Thou wast the seal of resemblance, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty; thou wast in the pleasures of the paradise of God, every precious stone was thy covering, &c. . . . Thou hast walked in the midst of the stones of fire; thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day of thy creation, until iniquity was found in thee; thy inner parts were filled with iniquity, and thou hast sinned; therefore I destroyed thee, out of the midst of the flames of fire."† Any one of these sentences will be sufficient to afflict him and put him to shame.

18. The fourth is the joy of the blessed when they beheld the devil cast out of Heaven for his pride, as

\* Isaias xiv. 12, 13, 15, 11.

† Ezechiel xxviii. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

St. John speaks of it in the Apocalypse, *Et projectus est draco ille magnus, serpens antiquus, qui vocatur. diabolus et Satanas*. And they said, *Nunc facta est salus, et virtus, et regnum Dei nostri; propterea lætimini, cæli, et qui habitatis in eis*—"And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan." And they said, "Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of God, and the power of Christ; therefore, rejoice, O Heavens, and you that dwell therein."\*

19. The fifth, the malediction which they will hear, together with the condemned, on the Day of Judgment, pronounced by the mouth of Christ, and anticipating it for them, and it will add greatly to their affliction to hear it repeated by the mouth of such insignificant creatures as we are. *Ite maledicti in ignem æternum*—"Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."†

20. The sixth, the words which Christ addressed to the Apostles, when seeing them rejoice that demons should be subject to them, he said to them, *Videbam Satanam sicut fulgur de cælo cadentem*—"I saw Satan like lightning fall from Heaven."‡ We shall do well often to remind the devil very frequently of these words.

21. The seventh, the truth uttered by the humble, when they tell the devil that he is better than they, confounds him, for they say to him that if God had bestowed upon him the same blessings as upon us, if for the devil He had become incarnate and had

\* Apoc. xii. 9, 10, 12. † St. Matt. xxv. 41.

‡ St. Luke x. 18.

died, and had waited until he was better and more thankful, he would have repented. And that we may say to him in these words of Christ, *Si in Tyro et Sidone factæ fuissent virtutes quæ factæ sunt in te*—"If in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in thee."\*

22. The eighth, the exhortation addressed to them by the simple, entreating them to repent, to make an act of contrition, and saying to them, "Dog, since thou art a sinner like myself, acknowledge Jesus Christ to be thy Lord." This is a weapon of fire against them.

23. The ninth, in the name of Christ to assume the empire over the devil, and to adjure him in the same words with which the same Christ our Lord cast him from Him when he tempted Him in the desert, *Vade Satana, Dominum Deum tuum adorabis, et illi soli servies*—"Begone, Satan, the Lord thy God thou shalt adore, and Him only shalt thou serve."†

24. The tenth is a full revenge on all the injuries and insults he casts upon us, giving thanks to our Lord for the chastisement He has inflicted upon his pride, and addressing him thus, "Be silent, for when I communicate I will offer the Blood of Jesus Christ in thanksgiving that He has cast thee into hell; blessed be He Who has thus chastised thy iniquities." These words terrify these demons and make them greatly afraid of venturing to tempt those who are not afraid of them, but rather rejoice in fighting them, seeing that in virtue of Christ being their Captain they always come forth conquerors, and that their

\* St. Matt. xi. 21.

† St. Matt. iv. 10.

souls are ever invigorated by these encounters with their enemies.

25. The traveller being now armed for his journey, it will be necessary to warn him of the crooked paths he may meet with, that he may not stray into them, and of the thieves who lie in wait to rob him, and of the false steps he may make, so that he may know how to escape them, and this is the subject of the following chapter.

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## CHAPTER VI.

SOME COUNSELS WHICH MAY SAVE US FROM FALLING  
IN THE PATH OF PERFECTION.

**W**E wander very much in this way of prayer, when the soul is not disinterested in its intercourse with God, and when it is asking for His gifts, for light, or consolation, or revelation from His Majesty, for this is not the way to obtain these favours. Moreover, it shows a depressing knowledge of the character and the ways of God, Who is accustomed to give Himself without measure to those who do not look for joys or consolations in serving Him. Therefore, we gain much in having nothing but a devout and pure intention of simply pleasing God in all our exercises of prayer, whether it be with dryness at one time or with joy at another.

2. It is of great advantage to recognize and discern, by all the means and in all the ways we can, the great

opposition there is between our rational appetite and our spirit of sensuality, endeavouring to separate ourselves as far as we can into two persons ; being as they are the two adversaries that cause this civil war within us, and who are always bent upon slaying one another, without allowing themselves one hour of peace. For from this division springs great light wherewith to fight the interior battle, to unmask and see the features of our domestic enemy, and to estimate aright purely spiritual acts ; not building on any sensible thing, although it be very good, because it is not firm, but is like a foundation made of sand, and even more shifting. This light causes an infinite number of ignorances, troubles, and afflictions to cease, together with imaginings that we are going on badly when we do not feel any sensible devotion, or any consolation in our spiritual exercises, and therefore we allow ourselves to fall.

3. Very good results come from not paying attention to any natural inclinations or disinclinations we may have in the service of God, giving no heed to them in beginning or leaving off our prayers, but being determined to persevere. For, otherwise, when the inclinations and prevalent fervours do not last, the soul will slacken in its resolves. The flesh is very idle and inclined to evil, and very much opposed to the light and liberty of the soul ; and the occasions are very rare in which it finds an inclination for, or any pleasure in, works of virtue, and still less for troubles which are in contradiction to its nature. Let, however, reason recover its empire—let it rule the flesh with despotic sway—and we shall make great

progress; for we cannot advance at all excepting when we offer violence to our sensuality.

4. Let us learn at once what it is that God requires from those who begin to serve Him in earnest, that we may not transgress by doing things which He does not command and which are not pleasing to Him. This then is the labour which the Master of this vineyard requires from us; to pluck out pride from our hearts by the roots, and to extinguish all desires of being esteemed for our own excellence, of pleasing men and obtaining their good opinion. For it was this sole vice of Lucifer which shut out God from entering within his soul, and which prevents His Majesty from working within our own souls according to His wish and desire, as he does within the souls of the humble. Let us, then, conceive a hatred of pride; let us be convinced of its criminality and the injury it does to our Lord, and let us be fully determined to tear it out of our hearts.

5. Our first desires being generally very vehement and fervent, we must guard ourselves against the great risk to which we are exposed of falling by their means. The danger consists in this, that we desire to root out in no more than a couple of days the bitter and filthy roots of our carnal appetites, and so remain ever after wise and pure, and humble and peaceful. And when this sudden presumption covers itself with a cloak of sanctity and fervour, it is all the more dangerous, and causes many of those who have entered upon the service of God to leave it. We cannot fly along this road seeing we have no wings; we must proceed step by step, according to the

measure of strength each one of us possesses. Not even God expects that these enemies of our souls should quit us all at once; but, on the contrary, He wills that we should combat them during many years for the sake of increasing our humility, and in order to gain our crown. Let us be content, then, to have a hatred of, and to feel disgust at, our passions; and let us be resolved to suffer the torments they give us, and to be continually in arms against them, answering them nothing if what they ask be contrary to reason—directing ourselves in everything according to what is right, like men, and not according to inclination, like beasts.

6. We must learn to put up with faults, and not to slacken one step on account of them. Because, if we are not adepts in this art—which is the most difficult, however, we have to practice in this way—we shall run the risk of turning back. To serve God without any deficiencies can only be done in Heaven. What we have to learn from them is to rise again as soon as we fall, entreating immediately for pardon without being astonished or embittered or disheartened, no matter how great and numerous our falls may be; but humbling ourselves and being contrite, and rising again with as much courage and energy as we can, for this is great wisdom and a sure means of making progress.

7. We must endeavour by all the means in our power, and especially by consultation with our Spiritual Father, to arrive at a knowledge of, and to obtain light by which to perceive what is the way and the talent of prayer which God desires we should

attain ; because if we obstinately persevere in pursuing a way which is not in accordance with the desire of God we lose much, and though we may make great efforts we shall not make great progress.

8. We must walk at the pace God prescribes, neither prolonging or abridging any exercise beyond what God desires. Because when the demons see that we guide ourselves by our own judgment, even when the employment is holy, they enter into our hearts as into a house that belongs to them ; for they consider their own the hearts of those who follow private judgment, and then, without one being able to perceive it, they incline us towards what will do us harm, suggesting to us plausible reasons, stirring up a sensible fervour in us, enkindling our desires in order to make us pleased with ourselves, and inspiring us with a feeling of security and satisfaction in the good we are performing, and of resistance to the opinion of another, even though it be that of our spiritual guide.

9. We must persevere in our spiritual exercises, prizing them greatly, guarding ourselves from that false undervaluing which leads us to imagine that it does not signify if we neglect our spiritual reading, examination, &c., either through human respect or because of occupation or indisposition. God alone, or some obstacle which cannot be overcome, is a sufficient cause to make us omit them. Moreover, let it be remembered that the devil knows very well that, unless the spirit be shorn of these her locks, it is not possible to bind this Samson who makes war upon him and renders himself invincible.



10. We must not measure God by our own littleness, picturing to ourselves such a God as does not exist, because we do great injustice to Him and injury to ourselves; or limiting His mercy, as if He were but a man such as we are; we thereby become afraid of going to Him and entreating pardon when we fail in our resolves, and return to our former sins. Looking upon His Majesty as though He resembled ourselves in His nature, and would tire of so much fickleness, so much weakness, so much forgetfulness, and would take vengeance on our sins by depriving us of His succour, and allowing us to fall more and more; imagining that by our sins we prevent Him from showing mercy to us, with other pieces of foolishness worthy of our ignorance. God is not such a Being as this. Let us, then, throwing away our delusions, awake from our fair dreams, and see Him as He is—good, merciful, a compassionate Father, long-suffering, and Who forgives sin; for, by giving to God the credit which is His due, we put Him under an obligation to show mercy to us.

11. Let us greatly value all such tender devotions as help us to advance in the love of God; and let us guard ourselves from that presumptuous spirit which considers that in these things there is no solid virtue, and says so, in order to depreciate them; because, in its arrogance, it is not capable of entering into these delights which are enjoyed by the children of God. All the Saints have had recourse to them, and have esteemed them greatly; for they knew that, like leaves, they shelter precious fruits, and that tender devotions nourish great virtues.

12. In resolving to serve God perfectly we must not be afraid of appearing to do so; but, with uncovered face, we must honour ourselves in being good Christians, who look upon God as their King, and not on the world or its laws. And when the worldly, who are slaves of pride, make a mock at us, and laugh at us, because we will not break the laws of God; we must clearly see, and perfectly understand, that they honour us by these things, and place a crown on our heads. Let us not be inconstant or stupid, but, having already resolved to be servants and slaves of God, let us hasten to show that we are. And when those who call themselves our equals nickname us saints and fools and prudes, let us make a mock at them, and let us consider it to be an honour that we are indeed the servants of God, and look upon them as blind, ignorant, and slaves of their vices; and let us give thanks to God that they do not ask us to join in these assemblies, games, and carousals, seeing we are of the number of those who are honoured by Christ, and whom He looks upon as the great ones of His kingdom.

13. These are the counsels which are most required in order that we may not turn back from the way of perfection, as so many have done, because of the difficulties which they encounter at the beginning of it; some of them arising from fear, others from ignorance, others from the simulated fervours with which Satan inspires them, others from the bad example of those with whom they hold intercourse, and who, being weak and imperfect, yield beneath the

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pressure of difficulties, because they have not had recourse to advice, or entered upon the way with prudence.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### REMEDIES AGAINST FAULTS.

**W**E must be convinced that we have faults, and that if we are to advance we shall be continually falling; for if a child should refuse to walk because of the fear he had of falling at every step, he would never learn to walk. It is of great use to know this, and to be persuaded that we shall over and over again break our resolutions and be conquered by our passions, in order that we may not be astonished when we do fall, and that we may give thanks to the Lord, Who holds us by His hand.

2. We must be aware that our faults are venomous, and will afflict the heart with faintness, sickness, and bitterness; and then we shall recognize their effects and learn to suffer them as a penance justly due to our sins, and by so doing we shall have great merit.

3. It must, however, be remembered that pride is able to repent of faults, and that with such exceeding bitterness as to provoke us to the sharpest repentance, as it did in the case of Judas, whom it drove to despair. This evil kind of repentance must be resolutely resisted, because it causes an unprofitable sorrow, which does not spring from God, but from our own presumption, and from our not recognizing our

own weakness and misery. Moreover, in the time we are thus uselessly wasting we add to the sin we have already committed, which is often nothing more than a venial sin, and sometimes less, seeing we are none of us without imperfection, and then the remedy to which we foolishly have recourse is to commit many deliberate venial sins.

4. We must pay great heed to the arguments urged by the good and the evil spirit within us, and which are in such direct contradiction. We shall then see that, before committing a fault, the good spirit aggravates it and dissuades us from it, although it be only an imperfection, in order to prevent our will from consenting to it, whilst the evil spirit facilitates it, and persuades us to it by plausible and urgent reasons. As soon as we have fallen the two spirits change places ; the evil spirit heightens the fault and incites us to give up all for lost, increases the difficulty of returning to entreat pardon, and suggests the impossibility of making amends ; whilst, on the other hand, the good spirit lessens it, facilitates pardon, encourages the soul to entreat for it, and encourages it to go forward. By this we see clearly that it is the evil spirit which fills us with dismay at having fallen, and that it is the good spirit which persuades us to advance notwithstanding our faults, to humble ourselves, and to ask pardon for them.

5. The most effective remedy for this sensible bitterness, and the discouragement which arises from falling again and again, is for a man to separate himself into two, and to be aware that these sensible pains are felt in the inferior part. The rational man

will perceive the unreason of the animal man in feeling it to be so difficult to ask pardon of God, because he does not like to abase himself so often before God, or to recognize his own misery, or to give to God the glory of being forgiving, good, and merciful, and never tiring of bestowing pardon. Knowing this, the spirit will suffer the torments which the sensitive portion inflicts upon it with patience, and will scoff at the demons that attack it, and which are the discouragements, tediums, difficulties, and resistances we meet with when we desire to entreat mercy from a God so good, that, instead of reproaching us or being offended at us, He enriches and feasts the repentant sinner.

6. It is a very powerful remedy, to be convinced in our souls that we give great joy to our Lord and do Him great honour when we entreat of Him pardon of our sins; for when the soul is wanting in this light and in the knowledge of this truth the demons readily find an entrance into it, and address all manner of lies to it, such as that God is wearied of expecting anything from us, seeing that we correspond so ill to Him, that, being angry with us, He hides Himself, and chastises and discourages us, with other like delusions which our ignorance does not perceive, and the conclusion of which is that we do not return to God to tell Him of our faults, and to entreat of Him pardon.

7. Let us note well the results which follow when we conquer the disinclination that we feel, and, in spite of it, come and ask pardon from God, and the contrary effects that result from the vain sorrow which

is born of pride ; and we shall find that when we entreat for pardon, immediately peace comes to us, together with joy and vigour, enabling us to return to the path and to the battle ; and that when we are ashamed to entreat for it, and are idle and indulge in vain sorrow, we are visited with bitterness and discouragement, and are troubled with despair of ever being able to gain the victory, and consequently are inclined to give up everything.

8. It is a great thing in the eyes of God not to allow ourselves to remain in a fault, but to rise immediately ; and if we can do so with even greater vigour it will be an agreeable sacrifice. By so acting we shall disarm all the powers of hell, for there are no arms more powerful there than our sins. And if we know how to profit by them, and by their means arrive at a better knowledge of God and of ourselves, and receive new mercies, the devil will then be conquered on all points by these new tactics, through we turn the very bullets of the enemy against himself.

9. We must learn to estimate our sins aright, for this is a great remedy against the injury the enemy does us through not knowing how to do this. The sins which are only occasional, and which the soul does not habitually commit, weigh but little in the eyes of God, and are but as dust upon the surface of the soul, which may be washed away with holy water. On the other hand, the greater inclination we have to any sin the more it harms us, and the greater the care, faith, hope, and energy required in order that we may not give ourselves up for conquered, but may

- trust in the Lord, Who will provide us with a remedy. And like valiant men, keeping alive our courage, although we fall a thousand times, we must exhort ourselves in this manner, "See ; it is nothing. The mercy of God is greater ; He will remedy it." Think of David, who at once had recourse to a *peccavi*, and was immediately forgiven by our Lord.

10. Let us fully confide in the abyss of the goodness of God, of Whom our wretched hearts are afraid ; as though He were a man like ourselves, and not even an honourable, benevolent man, but rather a revengeful man, full of rage, and who has exhausted all his patience. Let us not do Him this injustice, or picture Him as so different from what He really is—infinately pitiful, loving, compassionate, and never tired of pardoning. Then, honouring Him as His Majesty merits, we shall find a delight in drawing near to Him as a Father, Who will pardon us, receive us, and bestow upon us treasures and blessings in return for the sins over which we have wept.

## CHAPTER VIII.

CERTAIN TRUTHS ON WHICH THE SPIRITUAL EDIFICE  
MUST BE BUILT.

I HAVE more, and I have less, than I merit ; which is as much as to say, "I have more mercies and favours, and fewer trials and chastisements." The soul being fixed upon this foundation stone, it will not be surprised that God does not give to it the light and the favours which He grants to His beloved spouses, seeing clearly that it does not merit such especial grace ; neither will it complain of interior or exterior troubles, nor will they appear great to it, but rather will it be full of gratitude and astonished at the loving kindness of God ; that being worthy of hell, and of being cast off by His hand, He should treat it with such kindness and chastise it as a son. Therefore, when in its frailty it complains, He reproaches it severely, saying, "Of what dost thou complain, seeing that thou deservest to burn in hell ? Wherefore is this pride ? In what do thy grievances consist ?" and with this reproof He represses its feelings and it is calmed interiorly.

2. *Second.* Must suffer and not cast the cross from our shoulders, that is to say, the troubles and temporal afflictions which we suffer. This truth is the chiefest and greatest of the spiritual life, whereby the soul is directed to God, under pain of not having life, or being at peace with His Majesty, because formerly we desired to cast away the burden of



troubles put upon us, and which His Majesty calls His Cross. We did this, moreover, with the greatest obstinacy and blindness, as if it was a hindrance to our perfection, for in this light our self-love beheld it, and as an obstacle to prayer, to the recollection we desired to preserve in it, and to our spiritual reveries. Then, having thus convinced ourselves that it was a stumbling-block, a hindrance, and an obstacle to our perfection, all our life was spent in the endeavour to rid ourselves of it; but as God knows that, on the contrary, troubles are the direct path to Him, the way namely of His Cross, which all His Saints have trod, He does not desire that we should cast them away. We shall, therefore, die and be destroyed as long as we entertain this impossible pretension, and until we give up so mistaken an idea, and follow God by taking up our cross, embracing it, deserving all kinds of trials, and receiving them as from the hand of God, although He sends them by creatures and devils—whether they be infirmities, temptations, weaknesses, evil report, want of talents, poverty, failures of consolations, injuries—until we direct our footsteps into the path which leads to God, and which consists in giving up our own judgment and desires, and submitting ourselves to the will and the decrees of God. Hereby He tells us to look upon trials as the nourishment of the soul, and upon the Cross as the tree of Paradise, the palm of the conqueror, the bed of His spouses. Therefore, he who knows how to live this spiritual life does not seek to cast away the cross, but to suffer it, and afterwards to rejoice in it, as did the Apostle.

3. *Third.* God desires that we should serve Him, neither more nor less than His Majesty desires to be served. He has, however, some ignorant servants, who labour very hard in things which their Lord does not wish them to take in hand, and in which they spend time to no profit, but only expose themselves to the displeasure of their Lord, and are reprov'd as ignorant and obstinate. It is light and profit to us to serve God, not after our own fashion, but in the fashion and in the way that He desires. If God does not wish fastings, nor disciplines unto blood, nor any other of the valiant deeds performed by the Saints, wherefore should we torment ourselves, wherefore should we not remember what is written, "In the day of your fast is found your own will: obedience is better than sacrifice." Through not knowing this, many penitents have been very presumptuous, and have fancied that they were doing much, and despised others who were better than themselves, and who knew the will and good pleasure of God, which is that they should always submit their judgment and will in everything, and do that which God requires of them without objection or complaint.

4. If God wills that we should sleep, let us sleep, and if He wills that we should watch and fast, let us watch and fast. It will be all one to us, because it is the good pleasure of God. He does not wish that we should slay ourselves, but only mortify our corrupt nature, and strive to destroy our own private judgment, together with our self-esteem and our self-will. By means of the light which we shall then obtain we shall proceed quickly and easily in the direct path, out of

which others have strayed, and who, although they desire it, cannot make progress, being weak and infirm, and preoccupied. And yet, presumptuous and blind persons such as these, desire to close the road against these poor souls, whilst God does not shut Himself up from those who know how to serve Him neither more nor less than God commands.

5. *Fourth.* God has no need of us, except to bestow benefits upon us. This is a sufficient reply to whatever doubts and complaints the soul may entertain, and to the desires which it has to perform great works for God, and whose indiscreet fervour makes it impatient and annoyed at this truth. Let us remember, however, that whatever our Lord asks of us, and whatever may be the employment He gives us, they are for the purpose of bestowing benefits upon us; that His Majesty can do whatever He pleases better of Himself alone, than by means of wretched instruments, but that He takes pleasure in giving us these things by which we may merit a crown.

6. It likewise follows that in taking from us the filthy nourishment of our own natural affections, in destroying our health, casting to the ground our earthly supports, children, parents, friends, it is not to do us evil, but to break through our bonds, and bring us forth to liberty, and He does the same thing when He permits us to be tempted and persecuted, so that we may be forced to seek God, and may not take refuge in creatures, whilst those who are ungrateful, through want of enlightenment, look upon

these things as chastisements and manifestations of severity.

7. *Fifth.* "He does much who loves much." By means of this truth the fatigue and anxiety are made to cease which many experience because they do nothing for our Lord, entangling themselves in matters in which the Lord does not take pleasure, whereby they are deceived, forgetting as they do the thirty years' silence of Christ, and all the life of our Lady, who, though silent and loving, did more than all the Apostles. They do not know that the greatest occupation of all in which to be employed, is to delight with interior peace in the perfection of God, and in His rule and His glory.

8. This is the better part chosen by Mary, and which He gives us when He does not desire to confide the occupation of Martha into our hands, and which, if they are to escape reproof and not occasion disturbance in the soul, must have the good pleasure of God for their sole object. Thus the substantial occupations of the soul, which consists in delighting itself in God, does not cease because it is not performing the employments which sensible love desires, and which ought to be corrected by the wisdom of spiritual love. Herein we may learn from the Angels, who never slay their fellows, because they do not descend from Heaven to guard us, nor look upon them as idle, simply because they are doing nothing but loving and praising God. We shall, moreover, conclude that those who are truly wise in spirit do not expire through performing great works, but through extreme love, trusting themselves with

the good pleasure of God and by desires for His glory, and these are they who are as well satisfied when they are commanded to sit down and eat, as when they are commanded to enter into the fire or into the den of lions.

9. *Sixth.* We must give a right direction to our intention or the aim of our will. We give a right direction when, in all we do, we aim at nothing but the pleasure and glory of God alone, desiring nothing but that His Majesty should be obeyed and glorified, and doing all to please Him. Then it is that the eyes are directed aright; and as it is a great deformity in the face for the eyes to squint, so it is in the soul to pretend to seek God, and at the same time to search after its own happiness and honour. The highest kind of friendship, however, looks only at the welfare of its friend, and when he is satisfied both are satisfied; in like manner the soul which is not blind in one eye does not entertain the distorted fancy that God should feast it, teach it, &c. It finds its own happiness and its own satisfaction in seeing God pleased, and this is that single eye which Christ praises in the Gospel, and in His Spouse, whence also comes the fountain that springs forth to life eternal.

10. *Seventh.* No one has more than what God gives him. This truth being as certain as it is clear, all those forget it who judge their brethren, who are indignant at their behaviour, who despise their want of understanding and their other failings; for if they consider this truth, they will see that they are indignant against our Lord, Who did not will to give them more talents, and are themselves boasting of what is

not theirs but God's, Who gave it to them without any merit of their own, and Who gave it to them in order that they might pay Him back with interest.

11. This light is shed upon us from many crannies, and calls for a great recognition from us of the mercy of God, Who by means of His grace alone has to will to put away from us natural evils. Passing on to the especial succours granted to the soul, the understanding is drowned in the abyss of the charity of God, Who has bestowed upon it so much grace, and now it is scandalized at anything, knowing well that if God had denied to it His light, it would have sunk into greater abominations than the greatest sinner in the world falls into.

12. God and trials are God. This truth is not perceived by these souls who, whilst they love our Lord, weep greatly over their trials, and are in fear of them; and who do not observe that, by clinging to God through grace and with purity of affection they shall want for nothing, since God is the essential good, and that without Him, even if they possessed all good things, it would be hell, because all these things are but accidents without substance, whilst God without any good things, and even with all kinds of evil things, is the substance of glory and of blessedness, without any accidents. Therefore, the just ought to bear in mind, in the midst of their troubles and humiliations, that they are sons of God, that they may thereby alleviate the weight of the cross, and recollect that being sons they must be treated as sons, and not disown the device inscribed

on their banner, but take these trials and humiliations as a sure sign of their being sons indeed.

13. All these reasons will recur to the memory, if we keep each of them in readiness for the occasion, and will be as a flash of lightning to the soul in the midst of its darkness, showing it the right path, and dilating the heart with joy.



## A SPIRITUAL COMPENDIUM.

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### Second Treatise.

*On Meditations for the Purgative, the Illuminative,  
and the Unitive Ways.*

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#### OBSERVATIONS.

**T**HE three ways are divided into four weeks. The first week is intended for those who are going along the purgative way, that they may be inspired with sorrow for their sins, and with penitence, which is the purge of an evil life.

The second and third weeks are for those who are proceeding along the second, or illuminative way. During this time, the mysteries of Christ our Lord and of His Incarnation until His death, are the subjects of meditation, whereby there is shed on the soul the light of the treasures which are bestowed on it in suffering.

The fourth week is intended for those who aim at union with God through love. This is the unitive way, and to those who walk in it are given the glorious mysteries which are most helpful to love.



To all these meditations the same preparations and general observations are applicable; therefore, in order not to repeat them before each meditation, they are set down briefly here.

*First.* That we ought always to enter upon prayer without any other desire or intention than that of giving pleasure to God during that season of our retirement, without the alloy of any intention to seek consolation or quietness by its means, for this is pride; and the humble soul knows that it does not merit anything of the kind, and that God does enough in suffering the bad odour which exhales from such a sink as is that of our hearts. It will, nevertheless, persevere, no matter what may be the treatment it receives from God, and unless it maintains this intention intact, it will at once leave this sacred exercise on finding itself dry and tempted, and he will fancy that prayer is not for it, and that it is but losing time.

*Second.* That the devil has three methods for hindering prayer. The first has regard to the posture of the body. If he sees that the person who prays is weak, he will persuade him to sit down, and not to remain on his knees, because it tires him and does him harm; if he see him full of resolve and fervour, he will tempt him to remain longer at prayer than is well for him, and will tell him that it is very important he should overcome obstacles, as the Saints did. This he does with a view of tiring the body and preventing the soul from giving its whole attention to the meditation on which it is engaged. The person must in such case at once have recourse to such exterior

reverence as will most aid his intention, determining to remain on his knees and in darkness, rather than on foot and in the light, until he sees what the hindrances are in his way, and then he must seat himself in such a way as to show that he feels himself to be in the presence of God.

The second method is with regard to the time fixed for prayer, wherein the devil endeavours to make the person leave off before the hour is over, because he knows that it is whilst giving the last blows he who digs finds his treasure, and he who prays finds his reward, which is consolation and the light of God.

The third method is to attack the imagination; whereby, when God puts to the test the fidelity of him who prays, the enemy is allowed great power over us, dissipating our thoughts, so that they cannot rise to God, for otherwise he loses all his strength, which is founded on darkness and ignorance of eternal truths.

This is the greatest of all trials, and those are overwhelmed by it who cease from prayer. The remedy is to recollect ourselves, and resume the exercise, although it be with dryness, and to endeavour to be humbled and resigned, and without bitterness or discouragement, for this is a very acceptable prayer, and the act of a courageous soul. Moreover, the devil does not desire that those who pray should know that this is good and pleasing to God, because then he loses out of his quiver a dart which is of great use to him against these valiant soldiers. Therefore, he tries to make them imagine that they are doing nothing, that they are losing time, that they have no talent for such an exercise, and so they need not

attempt to betake themselves to meditation, that it will be better to have recourse to vocal prayer, or something else that is useful, and he is filled with rage to see them return with peace and humility to their meditation, which holy obstinacy is followed by great light and happiness in the time remaining in the presence of God.

At other times the enemy endeavours to excite spiritual doubts in the soul, in order to divert the imagination from the exercise in which it is engaged ; these foolish thoughts, spite of their disguise, may soon be recognized by the faithful lover, and quickly repelled.

*Third.* That we should begin each hour fully resolved to follow the movements of the Holy Spirit, not resisting it in anything, although it should be opposed to our most ardent inclinations and to our joys, because the smallest pin which pierces the heart prevents the spirit from taking the highest flights.

*Fourth.* That the interior man, as being the shepherd over the unruly flock of his senses, must guard them jealously from forbidden pastures, for if they betake themselves to prayer, being already satiated, the soul will remain hungry, according to that which has been written, *Esurientes implevit bonis et divites dimisit inanes*—"He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away."\* And it is folly to desire to find enjoyment at the table of God, unless we have first given pleasure to His Majesty by the mortification of our senses.

\* St. Luke i. 53.

*Fifth.* That the soul should know what it seeks in prayer, and how it is to find it, in order that it may not fall into a snare, as subtle as it is invisible, into which so many fall, which is to waste all their time in reasonings, without proceeding to excite the affections of the will, and then resting in them as in God Himself, if the soul be so fortunate as in seeking Him to find Him. For this alone is the intention of the reasonings, as regards the subjects or points of meditation, and it would be going the backward way, if after having found God, we left Him in order to enter into reasonings.

*Sixth.* That in a season of distress and dryness we should not permit ourselves to fall away, for it is a trial sent from our Lord; therefore let us exhort ourselves to persevere, and let us aid ourselves as much as we can by the two affections given in chapter iii. of the first treatise, making choice of the affection most suited to our needs, and if we find that we have more devotion in uttering aloud these endearing expressions, let us utter them; but if it does not assist us, let us read them before the Lord, and let us imitate the dove, who takes a drop of water and raises her eyes to heaven, for in these seasons of trial we must use as many remedies as we can to alleviate the tedium which is caused by not being able to find repose for our thoughts with anything.

## CHAPTER I.

## THE PURGATIVE WAY.

## FIRST WEEK.

*Observation.*

**I**N all the seven meditations for this week attention must be paid to two things. First, to endeavour to feel grief and confusion for our sins whilst meditating upon them, and then, having obtained this affection, to encourage it and spend as much time in it as we can. Second, that when entering upon these meditations we should imagine our Lord to be present as our Judge, and that we should do reverence to him on our coming into His presence, presenting ourselves before Him as guilty sinners, who desire to confess their sins and ask mercy from Him.

## MONDAY.

MEDITATION I.—ON THE FIRST PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN LIFE.

*First Point.*

1. This meditation is divided into three points. The first is, that the end for which God has created man is in order to praise, reverence, and serve Him, and in return for these services to have eternal life bestowed on him.

2. The first reflection to be made upon this point must be on the words—Who has created me ; seeing

how God alone is the Lord of the soul, and He alone the Father Who created it. Finding, then, that I am the son of so noble a Father, to be filled with astonishment at myself that I should have so forgotten and undervalued the right which I enjoy of being the son of God, and have degenerated from the nobility, the blood, and the characteristic of so great a Father, and that I should have sold myself for these sensual pleasures to hard task-masters, like the devils, making myself a slave of this foolish and vain world, and of my own appetites, renouncing for them the birthright of so opulent and eternal a Father, in order to receive a mass of badly cooked and bitter pottage given to me by the flesh, such as was given to Esau ; in great consternation I will reflect on myself, and, applying to myself the whole parable of the Prodigal Son, be determined to flee from the pigsty where I have been living and from tending the cattle of my passions, and to turn my face towards the house of my Father to supplicate for pardon, and to serve Him without wages as His slave.

3. The second reflection must be upon the words—God has created me. Therefore I am not my own, but my Creator's—and by this title I am entirely His slave—how is it that I have treated myself as though I were my own, and disposed of my body in an evil way, and in like manner my occupation and my way of life, without making any account of or giving any portion of it to my Lord? How is it that I have stolen what is His, and sold it at such a wretched price to so many masters as I serve, and who are so cruel and avaricious? Great indeed is my iniquity,

and most just His indignation ! What labourer would suffer the tree he had planted to produce fruit for his enemies ? and yet God has suffered it without cutting me off from the face of the earth.

4. The third reflection is that God created me ; leaving so many creatures in the abyss of nothingness, albeit beholding in His eternity the unthankfulness and the many injuries I should offer him in return for the being He had bestowed upon me. Strange, indeed, is my ingratitude, and infinitely greater than what even animals show to their kin and to their benefactors. Let us then, my soul, learn to know and recognize a Father so worthy of honour, so good, so pitiful, Who, although He has been outraged by me, still loves me, calls me, and pardons me ; let us pay, in the best manner we are able, this infinite debt, serving Him from henceforth in all things as His slaves.

*Second Point.*

5. All things in the world were created that they may aid man to love and serve God alone. In that point there is matter sufficient to employ the whole life in prayer, and in learning, as the Apostle says, through visible things to know the invisible God and His divine perfections.

6. The soul enters, then, this world to behold its beauty, even as the Queen of Saba entered the house of Solomon. And it beholds there—how majestic a palace ! how perfect an edifice ! what crystal spheres ! what brilliant lights, which move and do not fall ! what wondrous clusters of precious gems ! how undisturbed their course through so many

ages! what influence they exercise over mortals! It beholds, moreover, two lights for the two seasons, the sun and the moon, which it is not necessary to feed with oil. It beholds the elements—how they keep his laws and his boundaries! What innumerable birds in the air! what a feast for the eyes! what countless fishes in the water, animals on the earth, fruits, trees, flowers! How regularly one thing succeeds another—generation after generation passing away in the course of time! It beholds the properties of the plants and the stones, the skill and instincts of animals; and, filled with fear, it exclaims, “What is this? Who has formed it all with such wisdom, adorned it with such art, and directed it with such wisdom? Who is it that presides over the universe with so much solicitude, with such careful providence? For what purpose are so many things created, so many gifts bestowed? wherefore is there so much variety, and so much expenditure? It is for me, who am so destitute, so unthankful, so ungrateful, that God has made so many snares of love! Who, then, is this Lord Who seeks to win me by so many benefits, Who watches at my doors, calls at my windows, solicits me by gifts, by signs, by letters, by symbols? How can I be deaf to the innumerable voices of all creatures calling thus upon me? How can I, instead of making a return of thankfulness, employ His benefits only in order to do Him injury by means of the beautiful creation which He has bestowed upon me, by my inordinate use of savoury meats, of the plumage of birds, of the skins of animals—employing everything to serve my pride



and to feed my tastes? For what a different end from that which I gave them didst thou assign them to me, O Lord! I confess that I merit Thy anger and Thy eternal indignation."

7. From this point must be raised a ladder up which we must continually arise to God; whenever we hear the little birds sing or behold the lovely flowers; the green meadows, the lambs skipping beside their mothers, the rivulets flowing, the trees giving shade. Then, awaking immediately at the sound of their voices, we must exclaim, *Ipsæ fecit nos, et non ipsi nos.*\* It is God Who gives these favours, and not ourselves; and all creation is but as a book printed in large letters, telling of the goodness, wisdom, and providence of God.

### *Third Point.*

8. The conclusion to be drawn from these two points, which are, that God created me for no other purpose than to serve Him with love, and that everything else must be a means towards that end, is very clear. It is that I must take nothing from creatures except what will help me to do better service to God, and to pay to Him the sweet tribute that He asks of me in this love; it being granted that not to do so is to commit a theft, treason, and iniquity against the God Who created me, and which must be paid, although it be only a flower or a fruit plucked without necessity.

9. To keep this resolution firm is the whole aim of this meditation, as well as that of all the three ways;

\* Psalm xcix. 3.

and thus some have used these meditations more than ten years with great profit to their souls ; and, indeed, a whole life would be well spent if it produced the fruits which this meditation aims at bringing forth, and which is to appreciate and rejoice in the end for which we are created here on earth, and to look for eternal life as our reward.

## TUESDAY.

## MEDITATION II.—ON SINS.

*First Point.*

1. The abhorrence of sin, and the fear of it, is engendered by the knowledge of its malice ; and this knowledge springs from the terrible effects which it has produced upon the most notorious sinners. Now, the first were the devils, whose chief was Lucifer. God created them in grace, without a body of flesh or a tempter—they delighted in their own being ; but when they received the command of God that Christ should be adored by all His Angels, and when it was revealed to them that God was about to become Man, and to be a Child, and to die, they considered it to be a disgrace to His spiritual nature, and took umbrage at it, and that to such a degree that they preferred to lose the grace of God, and the glory which He was able to give them, rather than submit to such humiliation.

2. This was the feeling with which Lucifer was inspired, and which he diffused like deadly poison throughout all Heaven, and it infected a third part of the Angels, and divided the Holy City, and set it in

battle array. Then the holy Angel St. Michael espoused the cause of God, and in the combat which he had with Lucifer brought down the pride of the dragon with these words, *Quis sicut Deus?* To which the devil made no answer, and therewith God pronounced upon him a sentence conformable to his malice, and in His anger cast him into the flames of hell for ever.

3. To reflect much at length upon the blindness of pride, which is nothing in itself but a lie, obscurity, and darkness. Because of this its blindness it imagined that it could rise to the highest seat in Heaven, whereas it was made to descend into the lowermost part of hell; and in the very thing whereby it fancied it would lose, there alone was true greatness and glory. There is, however, still more to reflect upon, even this, namely, that pride, although it was cast down into infinite misery because it did not will to humble itself or to understand, still persists in its obstinacy to such an extent as even now to exclaim—*Conscendam in cœlum, super altitudinem nubium in lateribus aquilonis, et ero similis Altissimo*—"I will ascend unto Heaven above the heights of the clouds; I will be like to the Most High."\*

4. To reflect upon the power of this appetite, the monarch of our passions, what influence it had over an Angel without flesh or blood, who was not ignorant, as indeed he could not be, that God had perfected him out of nothing, and that to separate himself from God was an infinite evil, whereas it was infinite good

\* Isaias xiv. 14.

to love the Creator. More than this, he was possessed of the most comprehensive and most vivid understanding of what God had done for him in His Creation, so that it was said of him, *Tu signaculum similitudinis*—"Thou wast the seal of resemblance." For being enriched with all kinds of virtues, even as it is said, *Omnis lapis pretiosus operimentum tuum*—"Every precious stone was thy covering,"\* yet, notwithstanding this, the idea of his own proper excellence had even greater influence over him, and disturbed his understanding, and weakened his will, and thereby cast him into hell. To reflect that this canker broke out in Heaven amongst pure spirits, and to say with Job, *Si in angelis suis reperit pravitatem, quanto magis hi qui habitant domos luteas, qui terrenum habent fundamentum, consumentur velut a tineæ*—"If in His Angels He found wickedness, how much more shall they that dwell in houses of clay be consumed."†

*Second Point.*

5. The next most famous sin was that of our first parents. The memory should here recall to mind that lamentable history, when Satan disguised himself as a serpent, and without seeking to conceal himself any farther, began to spit his poison into the heart of the first woman, saying, *Eritis sicut dii, scientes bonum et malum*—"You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."‡ She beheld the forbidden fruit, and it appeared good and pleasant to her, and forgetting all the obligations she was under to God, she ate; and

\* Ezech. xxviii. 13.

† Job iv. 18.

‡ Gen. iii. 5.

not contented with having destroyed herself by the mouthful she had taken, she acted the part of tempter to her husband, and succeeded in so working upon him that she constrained him also to sin. Then God came in search of him, and exclaimed, *Adam, ubi es?* and they came forth into His presence, full of shame at the iniquity they had committed, and being convicted, God condemned them to death, to be expelled from Paradise, and to suffer afflictions and anguish. Moreover, He sentenced to the like fate all their descendants.

6. We must reflect wherefore they sinned, namely, for an apple, without being hungry, and through no necessity, the appetite not making any demands upon them, and they being both of them subject to reason, the understanding knowing clearly what wretched food it was, that it was a lie which the devil had uttered, and that they would lose the favour of their Creator, yet nothing sufficed. How, then, shall a blind man be trusted if he is excited by passion, when occasions of sin suddenly arise, and he finds himself in the midst of them? The greatest thing whereby he most fails is light, in that although he does not doubt he shall be lost, and that God will leave him, yet, when he has made experience of it, he returns to sin. Let it be considered through what trifles, and which are indeed mere nothings, the perdition of the whole human race began; that Eve thoughtlessly separated herself from Adam to go and look at the tree which God had forbidden, and to indulge in discussions with a devil whom she knew to be the enemy of God, when she ought to have turned

her back upon him immediately on hearing his words, *Cur præcepit vobis Deus?*—"Wherefore has God commanded you not to eat?" Is it for me to ask God for a reason? *Vade Satanas.* In this manner must we reject with disdain the suggestions of this serpent from hell.

*Third Point.*

7. To reflect upon each sin in particular, in order to create such hatred of it in the will, that the very imagination of it freezes the blood and sends a tremor through the heart, wherein consists the security of the soul, caused by a holy fear of offending God. The mind must also be engaged in considering very minutely the evils caused by consenting to a wrong desire, to hatred, to injustice, to false swearing, in which impious men indulge as lightly as though they were drinking water.

8. At the same moment God takes away the life of the soul, which is His grace, and the other supernatural virtues associated with it, leaving only faith and hope, and those dead: the soul remains dead in the body, in the same manner as the body without the soul lies dead in the sepulchre, and is unable to raise itself to God in anything. The most Holy Trinity forsakes it, after having resided in it as its temple, and it remains frightful and blackened like the evil spirits; the Angels take flight, and the devil assumes possession and rules in it as the master. Is it not, then, marvellous compassion in God, not to permit the devil to precipitate it into a thousand abominations, seeing that it is he who commands and rules over it?

9. In regard to this point there is nothing which excites to a greater admiration of the goodness of God, and sorrow for our sins, than to see how many divine justice holds in the eternal dungeon, condemned to burn for ever, for fewer sins than I have committed, and allows me time for penitence and did not grant it to them, and wherefore is this? There is nothing else to say but that *voluit me*—He loved me, and therefore He waited and waits for me still with infinite patience; wherefore I owe Him my life and my actions and infinite praises; I must never any more offend Him Who has loved me so much, even when I was injuring and despising Him for a mere appetite.

### WEDNESDAY.

#### MEDITATION III.—ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF SELF.

##### *First Point.*

1. The great difficulty which man experiences in knowing his own vileness, must be overcome by tracing in various ways the fountains of his misery. The first way is to pass in review the seven mortal sins, which, if they do not reign in us, through the mercy of God, at least make war upon us, and bring us into manifest danger of death. We must then reflect upon the sin of pride in us, how rampant it is, and how we sacrifice to it the greater part of our life, and that not even our good works are free from this consuming vice. Then, what a desire the hungry heart has, not only for what is necessary, but also for what is superfluous, for the pomp and ornament of life, how we have to combat the flesh in order to

preserve chastity, how we are attacked by envy, anger, and the like.

2. We must reflect how, whenever we separate ourselves in the smallest degree from God, in order to see whether we are faithful, and can keep the resolutions which we made to Him when He was enlightening our understanding and strengthening our will, immediately our passions spring up again, and, according to St. Peter, we return, "As the dog returns to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire"—*Canis reversus ad suum vomitum, et sus lota in volutabro luti*.<sup>\*</sup> From this we shall see that without the help of the Holy Spirit we shall have no strength for anything, but that all is faulty. *Sine tuo numine, nihil est in homine, nihil est innoxium*—"Nothing pure in man will stay; all his good is turned to ill."

3. The second way is to behold in ourselves the three evils which are the greatest of all that are in the world, according to St. John. *Concupiscentia carnis, concupiscentia oculorum, et superbia vite*—"The concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eye, and the pride of life."<sup>†</sup> Then to look at our own little world, and to see what an ardent desire we have for our own enjoyment, our own interest, and our own esteem; how, like the Prodigal Son, we occupy our understanding and our will in feeding our senses with this forbidden tree of the world—good for nothing but to burn. Looking attentively at all this we exclaim—In what a miserable state has our soul fallen, daughter as she is of God, sister of the Angels.

<sup>\*</sup> 2 St. Peter ii. 22.

<sup>†</sup> 1 St. John ii. 16.



—whose food and life it is to accomplish the will of her Lord ; and yet, day and night, she wastes her time in serving her slave sensuality, which ought to be the slave of reason, so that reason should govern the will, and that the will should be governed by God.

4. The third way is to examine the interior and exterior senses, observing that not a single virtue has its seat in any one of them ; that our wandering eyes are continually gazing upon what *will* bring us death ; that our tongues are so voluble, precipitating the heart into vain discourses. How inclined are we to speak of self, and of things tending to the encouragement of a vain self-esteem ! How seldom it is employed solely for the purpose of pleasing God ! The ears, instruments of our curiosity, whereby the enemy fills the soul with evil imaginations, make wars upon us at the very season when the soul is occupying itself interiorly. In the touch there will be found much that is displeasing to God, seeing that it takes pleasure in what He ordered through necessity alone ; and the same with the senses of smell and taste.

5. From hence we must pass to the interior senses, and there we shall see an imagination which requires nothing in order that it should be entitled insane ; and which without cause or method employs itself in a world of irrelevant matters. How many foolish and idle chimeras does it not build up wherewith to entertain the childish, foolish soul, which, although it has been made a mock of so many times, is not thereby put on its guard, or rendered able to unmask them, having already yielded itself up into the hands of this frivolous faculty. How, without any reason

at all, the irascible and concupiscible parts of our nature rise in us and force us to do things which afterwards cause us shame and confusion. What an acute understanding we have for matters that do not weigh a straw; how blind and stupid we are in respect to those of the soul, which are worth untold gold. How ill-regulated is our will, how attached to earthly pleasures! What wildness, infirmity, hardness, and weakness does it exhibit in following God through His Cross.

6. Being touched with the feelings of so many evils, we shall over and over again repeat with the holy King David, *Non est sanitas in carne mea a facie iræ tuæ: non est pax ossibus meis a facie peccatorum meorum. Quoniam iniquitates meæ supergressæ sunt caput meum: et sicut onus grave gravatæ sunt super me. Putruerunt et corruptæ sunt cicatrices meæ, a facie insipientiæ meæ. Miser factus sum et curvatus sum usque in finem*—"There is no health in my flesh, because of Thy wrath: there is no peace for my bones, because of my sins. For my iniquities are gone over my head; and as a heavy burden are become heavy upon me. My sores are putrified and corrupted, because of my foolishness. I am become miserable, and am bowed down even to the end."\* After this manner, and filled with confusion, the soul casts itself in very fear to the ground; it adores and becomes dumb, hoping for pardon, even as Jeremias says, *Ponet in pulvere os suum, si forte sit spes*—"He shall put his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope."†

\* Psalm xxxvii. 4—7.

† Lament. iii. 29.

7. The fourth way is to imagine the soul in this miserable body, shut up in a dungeon of hell, where, plunged in misery, it passes a living death in a perpetual forgetfulness of God and separation from Him, which is the pain of loss; in company with devils who nestle in the senses of the body, continually tempting the soul, it lives, suffering a perpetual remorse of conscience for time lost, which is the gnawing worm. It lives in the flames of concupiscence, without being able to extinguish them, because of it having been asleep when it was made a prey to the fire, and therefore it exclaims, *Infernus domus mea est, et soror mea vermes*—"Hell is my house, and the worm my sister."\*

8. Then must we arise, according to the words, *Surgite postquam sederitis, qui manducatis panem doloris*—"Rise ye after you have sitten, you that eat the bread of sorrow;"† and we shall then see how differently God has treated us, how strong is the love He bears us, and how it has been thrown away on those who have so greatly offended Him. *Aquæ multæ* (of my sins) *non potuerunt extinguere charitatem, nec flumina obruent illam*—"Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it."‡ What wild beast is there which having received so many caresses would not be tamed? *Cognovit bos possessorem suum, et asinus præsepe Domini sui: Israel autem me non cognovit*—"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel hath not known Me."§

\* Job xvii. 13.

† Psalm cxxvi. 2.

‡ Cant. viii. 7.

§ Isaias i. 3.

9. If God had done to a heathen the things He has done to us, what gratitude would He not meet with? And what gratitude those who are in hell for lesser sins than ours would feel, what penitence would they show, and how would they profit by the time which we are losing! But recalling to mind His mercies one by one, even as Nathan revealed them to David, we shall exclaim—He Who might have created us vile, has created us noble; He Who might have given us birth among the Gentiles, has created us amongst Christians; instead of revenging Himself on the first injury done to Him by us, He has preserved us for penitence.

*Second Point.*

10. We must descend into the abyss of our faults, our blindness, and our ingratitude, crying out to God with St. Peter, *Exi a me, Domine, quia homo peccator sum*—"Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man."\* We must consider how that master of contrite hearts, standing afar off in the Temple, exclaimed, *Deus propitius esto mihi peccatori*—"O God, be merciful to me a sinner,"† and recommending our soul to God, we must say, *Delicta juventutis meæ, et ignorantias meas ne memineris*—"The sins of my youth and my ignorances do not remember."‡

11. The fruit of this exercise consists in our being impressed with a clear knowledge of what we merit at the hand of God, namely, that He should turn away His face from us, that He should repel us from His

\* St. Luke v. 8.            † St. Luke xviii. 13.

‡ Psalm xxiv. 7.

Kingdom, and should condemn us with the devils to suffer eternal damnation, remembering that if He has not done so it is entirely owing to His mercy. Moreover, it should excite all my admiration that He should draw near to a vile creature to show mercy to it, and forget the insults offered to Him in order that He may not chastise it for ever. Recollecting all this, we shall exclaim over and over again, *O inestimabilis dignatio charitatis*—"O inestimable sweetness of the charity of God!" Let us offer ourselves up to endure the contempt of man, and to be abandoned by God, and to know all the trials of this life, entreating of Him, like the Prodigal Son, that He would receive us, not as His son, but as one of the slaves of His house. *Non sum dignus vocari filius tuus*—"I am not worthy to be called Thy son."

#### THURSDAY.

##### MEDITATION IV.—ON DEATH.

###### *First Point.*

1. The end of this meditation is to depreciate the value of two things, which greatly hinder us from giving what we ought to God. One is, the vain glory of the world; the other, the esteem we have and the enjoyment we take in the body, which is destined to return to the dust whence it was created.

2. The first point is to picture to ourselves the approach of death; how some day, like to that upon which we are entering, without thought of any such thing, we shall feel somewhat ill at ease; how we shall take no heed of it until we are oppressed by

fever; how two days afterwards the sickness shall have risen to its height, and then in two days more, the message given by Isaias to Ezechias will be delivered to us, *Dispone domui tuæ, morieris enim tu et non vives*—"Give charge concerning thy house, for thou shalt die and not live."\* And it having come to this, we are desired to prepare to receive the Sacraments. After having communicated, we shall be left alone, and shall recall to memory three things. First, all our past life. What a different judgment we shall then pass upon the enjoyments for which we so often lost the friendship of God; how like to a dream and a vision of the night will the past pleasures seem, in which the worldly are plunged, to dream away the whole of their life, thinking of what they shall eat and what they shall drink, what they shall prohibit and what command, *Et cum expergefactus fuerit, vacua est anima ejus*—"And when they awake, they shall find their soul empty of all that they have loved in this life." Those who had possessions and riches will awake and see that they had laid up nothing for eternal life, *Dormierunt somnum suum et nihil invenerunt viri divitiarum in manibus suis*—"They have slept their sleep, and they shall find nothing in their hands."† From this idea of sleep the soul will profit much, if this life should appear to it to be much.

#### *Second Point.*

3. The last moments arrive. The recommendation of a departing soul will be said for us, from which we may take some words that may most move us; and I

\* 4 Kings xx. 1.

† Psalm lxxv. 6.

will repeat them to my soul as if it were the soul of another, *Proficiscere anima Christiana, de hoc mundo, in nomine Dei Patris omnipotentis, qui te creavit; in nomine Jesu Christi, Filii Dei vivi, qui pro te passus est; in nomine Spiritus Sancti, qui in te effusus est. . . . Commendo te omnipotenti Deo, et ei, cujus es creatura, committo; ut cum humanitatis debitum morte interveniente persolveris, ad auctorem tuum revertaris*—"Go forth, O Christian soul, from this world, in the name of God the Father Almighty, Who created Thee; in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, Who suffered for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost, Who was poured out upon you. . . . I commend thee to Almighty God, and commit thee to Him Whose creature thou art, that when thou shalt have paid the debt of humanity by death, thou mayest return to thy Maker." With other such words, entreating the soul to think of death, and to cease from its vain fancies, and from following the shadows and lies of this world, in which it seems to take pleasure, although they are but lies. Let it consider well this point, how uncertain is the season of its passage into another world, seeing that God has kept it secret for Himself, to the end that men should always be on the watch; warning them, nevertheless, that at the least want of care death is ready to come and steal in upon us, like a thief in the night.

4. The second consideration connected with this point has regard to what we have to leave in this world, children, wife, riches, works begun, all which made Ezechias complain, *Præcisa est velut a texente, vita mea: dum adhuc ordiner, succidit me*—"My life is

cut off as by a weaver, whilst I was yet but beginning he cut me off."\* Therefore, let us leave this consideration, resolved to love that which will alone give us happiness in that hour—viz., that which is eternal.

*Third Point.*

5. The third point which makes the soul tremble is the remembrance of the sentence which will be pronounced upon it at the last moment, and in which it will either die or live eternally; and the fear which is thus excited is well grounded, for as St. Peter says, *Si justus vix salvabitur, impius et peccator ubi peribunt*—"If the just shall scarcely be saved, what will become of the sinner?"† For it has been declared that the path to Heaven is the Cross, poverty, contempt of men; and the Angel says of those who are in Heaven, *Hi sunt qui venerunt de magna tribulatione*—"These are they who are come out of great tribulation."‡ How, then, shall we not fear who on so many occasions are so weak and so easily alarmed? Terrible moment, and feared by all the Saints. *Ubi ceciderit lignum, ibi erit. O momentum a quo æternitas*—Where the tree falls there shall it lay eternally. O moment, on which depends eternity! And is it possible that all the powers of the soul should not be occupied with this the greatest of all businesses; and that whilst it is undecided we can laugh, play, and sleep, when we ought not to give rest to the body, or sleep to our eyelids, before appealing to our Judge; presenting petitions to Him,

\* Isaias xxxviii. 12.

† I St. Peter iv. 18.

‡ Apoc. vii. 14.



and settling accounts with Him. As soon as the soul is parted from the body, that tremendous particular judgment will be pronounced, when we will have to hear one of these two sentences—"Go from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire;" or, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, come to My Kingdom." I will, therefore, picture to myself a condemned criminal, and try to imagine how the unhappy man would feel who is under a sentence from which there is no appeal. And I will endeavour to picture another criminal who is saved, and has been recompensed for all his trials.

6. After the soul has been separated from the body, let it gaze upon those eyes so dim and fixed, that tongue so silent, those ears so deaf, and let it say, In order to give pleasure to these senses I have laden myself with sin, when I ought to have employed them in serving God. Now I see that they are enemies, and from this moment I will treat them as such, and restrain them continually. Then let the soul follow the body to its burial; let it behold how they carry it away amidst tears, and with some chants place it in the church, and incense it in the sight of all; and then, the Office being ended, they bear it away to the grave, placing a stone upon it, after which the world forsakes it.

7. Let it remain there, and let all go and see the pride of States and of Governments, in what it all ends; and how ignorant is the man who esteems them and takes pleasure in them, he being truly in great misery and difficulty and peril of his salvation.

## FRIDAY.

## MEDITATION V.—ON THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

*First Point.*

1. In order that God may justify His dealings with men, He will gather them all together in the valley of Jehosophat, on the day known to His Majesty, and which He does not intend to reveal to us, that we may be ever on the watch. The heavens will stop their course, the elements be overturned, and the fabric of the universe be destroyed, at the very moment when men shall have most forgotten it. The whole of creation will be greatly moved, in sign that all is finished, and, afterwards, fire will descend from heaven on the four quarters of the world, and turn to ashes all the seeming beauty of it, together with everything that is alive upon the earth. Immediately afterwards, the voice of the Archangel, whom the Apostle calls *tuba Dei*—"the trumpet of God," will be heard crying out, *Surgite mortui, venite ad judicium*—"Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment." This is that which St. Jerome heard always in his ears, and this is what we ought to hear every day in ours.

2. All the dead will obey this clear mandate, as well those in Heaven as those in hell; let the soul then behold and observe the difference between the two classes, for this is the principal end of the meditation. The devil who aided each of the condemned to descend into hell, will inclose him once more in his own body, in which he delighted, and offended his Creator, and will make it deformed, fetid, and black as coal, and the miserable soul,

burning in flames, will see once more the wretched body, for whose sake, and for ministering to whose delights and iniquities, it willed to condemn itself to suffer eternal pain. How many curses will it utter for having taken pleasure in its appetites? What rage and desperation it will feel at being unable to remedy what it has done?

3. This is the light and the arguments whereby those must guide themselves who meditate upon this in due season, in order that they may abhor sinful pleasures, earthly greatness with its lies, and that they may treat their body as a slave who is their enemy, because they see now what will happen then, and that, on the other hand, it is through not thinking of these things that worldly and carnal persons cannot be induced to abhor their body, its pleasures and honours, which are the paths leading them to condemnation. For it is through this that the world is lost, no one considering in his heart, *Nullus est qui recogitet corde.*"\*

*Second Point.*

4. At that tribunal where all the world will be present, the condemned will be like bodies of fiery bronze, fixed to the earth, and waiting the curse of Christ. The just will come from Heaven, and the Angels attending on them will invest each with his own body, devoid of all the deformities associated with it when on earth, and fashioned after the form and model of the body of Christ our Lord. Then the soul, rejoicing in the pleasant society of the body, and in the trials which it suffered together with it, in

\* Jeremias xii. 11.

order to serve God, will clasp it in close embrace, in token that it will never leave it more, and will bathe it in such light that the least among the Blessed shall shine seven times brighter than the sun. The three other gifts of agility, subtlety, and impassibility also will be bestowed upon it. All will ascend into the air, *obviam Christo Domine*, to receive Christ our Lord, in sight of the condemned, who will open wide their eyes at seeing the difference made by God between the poor just men and sinners, princes, rich men, and great lords in the world, and will behold those called to be kings in the Kingdom of Christ, whom they despised, not desiring to speak to them or look at them. And being filled with repentance, they will exclaim, *Hi sunt quos habuimus aliquando in derisum, et in similitudinem improperii; nos insensati vitam illorum æstimabamus insaniam et finem illorum sine honore: ecce quomodo computati sunt inter filios Dei*—"These are they whom we had sometime in derision, and for a parable of reproach; we fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour; behold how they are numbered among the children of God."\*

5. Then will appear the standard of the Cross, the same as that on which Christ died, which St. Michael will bear through the air, whilst Christ our Lord will come afterwards, in a cloud as in a throne, similar to that of the Ascension. The celestial Court will come with Him, and the Queen of Heaven at His side, and on the one side and the other of the cloud will be the predestined, filled with glory, for this is to be on the

\* Wisdom v. 3—5.

right hand in the meaning of Scripture, by which is signified the best place, the left hand being the worst place. Here we must reflect how Christ blesses the just, and curses (with the same countenance) sinners, reducing the wicked to such extremity, that they would rather be cast into hell than behold the terrible face of their Judge.

*Third Point.*

6. The books of the consciences of all men will be opened, and the records of all the virtues, and the sins of all the demons, and that in less time than the closing of an eyelid, because, without speaking a word, God miraculously infuses into each of these present, the just as well as the condemned, a bright light by which he sees distinctly every thought, word, and work of all who stand there, and who have a clear understanding of the just reason God has to absolve, condemn, and reward. All mankind beholding this divine equity, Christ then turns to the just and says these words, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And turning to the condemned, he says, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Whilst He speaks thus, the earth opens and buries them alive in that dungeon, where they will burn throughout eternity, without light, without shelter, without consolation. And taking with Him His dazzling squadrons, the great God of Israel will enter Heaven, triumphant over His enemies, and bestowing upon His chosen soldiers laurels of glory, palms, and an eternal crown.

7. There is sufficient matter here for meditation on the grief with which the condemned descend, and the joy with which the Blessed rise—sufficient matter for meditation on the terrible question as to which of these two classes we shall be found in, on what side we shall be on that day. For the sentence to be pronounced in this one great lawsuit, on which our life, our honour, and our goods depend, is still doubtful, and being so, we sleep madly and vainly confident, without knowing in what we trust, making no preparation, which is an evil sign.

#### SATURDAY.

##### MEDITATION VI.—ON THE PAINS OF HELL.

###### *First Point.*

1. Hell is in the centre of the earth, steeped in darkness, and flames that give no light, and there the condemned suffer four kinds of pain, in which all others are contained.

2. The first is the eternal absence from God, with intense hatred of Him, because He has expelled them from Heaven, and which makes them break forth into abominable blasphemies, the pain of separation being increased by the despair of never more beholding God. God is the infinite good, and the blessedness of His creatures and their sole eternal good deprives them of Himself and condemns them to eternal fire, without giving ear to their prayers, tears, or intercessions, for the time has passed by. Let us then consider the good they have lost with Him, and which they might have enjoyed with the blessed. Let

us think what are the goods they have lost, and what it was for which they have lost them, how blinded in judgment, how drowsy in faith those Christian sinners who, in order to give pleasure to the taste, or to the eye, or for the sake of a vain honour, despised so great a birthright; and let us hold Esau in fear, who for a mess of lentils sold to his younger brother so great an inheritance. How much more mad are we when, like brutes, we only look at present pleasure, and not at the eternal torment which must follow.

*Second Point.*

3. The second pain is that never-dying worm which gnaws the entrails. This is that remorse of conscience of which Christ said, *Vermis eorum non moritur*—"Their worm dieth not."\* Let us reflect that the sinner is condemned, and then let us recall to memory the infinite patience with which He called him to repentance, and watched over him so many years, as if it concerned God, and not the creature, that he should be saved; and the number of times he was snatched out of the peril into which he had been plunged by his sins and by devils, and that these mercies, which were chains sufficient not only to bind men, but devils, he broke, in order that he might not live in the free prison of God, or bear His golden chains. Let the many opportunities which he had to confess be remembered; how easy he found it to obtain pardon, how petty were the things which hindered him, and how repentance and remorse of conscience, which

\* St. Mark ix. 47.

might, but *did not*, appeal to God, will torment him through the whole of eternity. From this infinite evil we may now liberate ourselves by the divine grace, turning ourselves to the Lord, responding to His inspiration, keeping his sacred commandments.

*Third Point.*

4. The third pain is the sensible pain, of which the imagination cannot conceive the awfulness, although we may form some faint idea of it by recollecting that God is the enemy, and that the injury is infinite, and the power of chastisement infinite also; moreover, that the will to take vengeance is without remission. Let us now consider that if it be a God Who is the enemy, a God Who has so powerful an arm, what will be the pains He will inflict upon a disarmed sinner.

5. Let us pass in review, one after another, the temporal pains which cause us most fear; let us afterwards unite them together, and let us realize that they are but as paintings and shadows compared with those of hell. Let us reason with ourselves that if we have not strength to keep a single finger for a quarter of an hour in the flame of a candle, or a red-hot coal in the hand, how can we suppose that we shall be able to bear to have eternal fire in our entrails? With what madness and fury have we been seized against ourselves, in that we do not care about exposing body and soul to be burnt without remedy! What forgetfulness reigns in our heart, seeing that although we are warned by faith of our peril, we take no heed or use any diligence in so great a matter; but



rather seek our own condemnation, inflicting injuries on God without count and without thought.

6. If such extraordinary diligence be shown in regard to a lawsuit or about any legal claims, so many expenses incurred, so many lawyers consulted, where is the prudence, the interest, the love of self, which permits the soul thus to condemn itself to so many evils?

*Fourth Point.*

7. The fourth pain is that all this has no end, but must be measured by the life of God; therefore, if our Lord gives light, the human judgment will strain itself to the utmost, and the terrified will break through all imaginable hindrances in order to ensure salvation.

8. Let the soul make sundry comparisons, in order to attain to some understanding of this incomprehensible evil. If God should say to Judas to-day that He would make a little bird sleep until the end of the world, that on the lapse of every hundred years He would awake it and send it to the Pacific Ocean to take a drop of water in its beak, and then that it should go to sleep again for another hundred years; it should go on, at this rate of progress until it had drunk up all the waters in the Pacific Ocean, and afterwards all that of the Atlantic, and of the Mediterranean—all the lakes, rivers, and fountains of the earth—until it had swallowed them all, and that then his sufferings in hell should cease, what a wonderful thing it would be. For from the moment that he heard these tidings the essential pain of his despair would cease, and his soul would rest in the

knowledge that the time would come at last when he would receive redemption. Eternity would thus be replaced by time, wherein the waters would be drunk up drop by drop. But it is not so; the waters will return and fill up the self-same space, and, innumerable years having passed, eternity will not pass, neither will the pain be mitigated by one jot, nor the soul be able to accustom itself to the torment. What, then, can be thought of a man endowed with a shadow of reason, if, in order not to do a small or passing injury to the flesh, which is his enemy, or not to lose honour amongst men, or for the sake of a piece of wretched self-interest, he sells himself to eternal flames?

9. Here we must humiliate ourselves beneath the terrible hand of God, and say with holy David, *Domine, ne in furore tuo arguas me*—"Lord, rebuke me not in Thy indignation."\* We must also learn the nature of mortal sin, and be convinced that rather than commit it, it would be better to suffer the pain of hell eternally. Let us therefore persuade our soul to embrace all the temporal pains in the world in order to escape those which are eternal, and beg of our Lord with tears, *Hic ure, hic seca, ut in æternum parcas*—"Let me be consumed, let me be burnt up here, so that Thou wilt spare me in eternity."

\* Psalm vi. 2.

## SUNDAY.

MEDITATION VII.—OF THE GLORY WHICH THE BLESSED  
HAVE IN HEAVEN.*First Point.*

1. Rewards and penalties are equally beneficent to the soul, by helping it to purge itself from its earthly inclinations and appetites; for good things desired, and evil feared, are as the oars and the sail, enabling the soul to navigate securely, and as two wings by which it escapes from the birdlime and snares of which this life is full, as was seen by the great St. Anthony.

2. The first thing to be done in this meditation is to recall to memory that day, so greatly desired by the predestined, of the general resurrection, when at the first signal given by the trumpet of God, which is the voice of the Archangel, the souls of the Blessed shall descend and assume their bodies, fashioned by the Angels in the likeness of Christ our Lord, and which, when the soul enters them, will be filled by it with light, even as the sun illumines a cloud. It will, moreover, be endowed with the agility of a spirit, and with subtlety which will enable it to penetrate through any body whatever, even though it were iron, as though it were made of air. There will also be bestowed upon it the fourth gift, of impassibility, neither will it be exposed to any dangers or fears, but will be as adamant. Then, without the delay of a moment, all the Blessed will rise through the air to receive the Judge, Who will come in majesty, rested upon a cloud as His throne, and having received the

benediction, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, enter into My Kingdom," and the condemned having been cursed, the happy prisoners will enter with their conquering Captain into the city of God, where each will find a place prepared for him in accordance with his merits.

3. Let it first be considered what an entrance the soul will give to the body, and how well rewarded it will be for all the trials, humiliations, fastings, and afflictions, which it suffered in order to serve God. Let it, moreover, be remembered how desirous it was to suffer more, what a different opinion it will have then of suffering, of doing violence to nature, and of the acts of virtues which the blind in this world hold in such contempt, abhorrence, and forgetfulness.

4. Secondly, let us consider the fear which the soul will experience on perceiving the perils to which it had been about to condemn itself, and still more on seeing all the pride and majesty of the world turned into ashes or molten iron, and the condemned rising to receive their eternal malediction. What then will be the gratitude of a soul, taken without any merits of its own out of so evil condition, there being amongst the condemned many who are not so wretched, or who have not committed so many sins as it has done. And now that we are convinced of all this, surely it is time we should come out into the light, and offer the like acts of thanksgiving.

5. Thirdly, let it be considered that men who deem themselves so provident and far sighted do nothing to secure bliss so great, so certain, and so eternal, and that for a mere shadow of temporal glory, they hurt,

and destroy, and lose themselves for ever, so that it seems as if they believed these things no more than if they were jests and fictitious tales, which is the state of mind feared by Solomon when he said, *Animo irreverenti et infrænato ne tradas me*—"Give me not over to a shameless and foolish mind."\*

*Second Point.*

6. The city which descended from above that it might be seen of St. John, was revealed that we may be able to form some idea of that our happy country. I saw, he says, the Spouse of the Lamb, the celestial city of Jerusalem, immense in size, its waters of crystal, the foundations precious stones, the gates pearls, the streets pure gold, all of it being a temple dedicated to the most Holy Trinity, Whose Divinity is seen and adored face to face. The sun that illuminates it is the Holy Lamb, and the moon the Queen of Heaven, the stars of the firmament are the Blessed. Amongst the nine choirs of Angels are mingled the Saints, who rose from earth to fill the space which the fallen Angels made when they were cast out of Heaven, and there have the ineffable vision which was bestowed upon St. John when he saw, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb, that river of delight which is the joy of the Holy Ghost, which rejoices and waters the city of God, a great number of trees being planted along its borders, always bearing leaves and flowers and fruit.

7. Here the soul may feed its imagination with all kinds of pleasures and delights that it can possibly

\* Ecclus. xxiii. 6.

conceive, and which yet fall infinitely short of the reality, for as the Apostle says, *Neque in cor hominis ascendit, quæ præparavit Deus iis qui diligunt illum*—"It hath not entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for those who love Him,"\* throughout eternity. The Blessed have always before their eyes all kinds of new and beautiful things to behold; the palate will always be thirsty, and will always be provided wherewith to satisfy it; the taste with savoury meats, the ears with a music so delightful that if mortal ears were to hear it the soul could not remain in the body, and the like with the other senses. Moreover, God will delight to manifest to His friends His omnipotence, and to pay them like a God for the poor pleasures they gave Him, providing for them food, and spreading for them a table loaded with infinite delicacies.

8. And here let us consider our own dulness in selling this heritage, to which Christ has given us a right through His Blood, for a few drops of bitter water, so scanty, so brief, drawn with so much trouble from the sink of our flesh, without our being able to satisfy our thirst by means of them, which parch our lips more and more, and which yet are sold to us at the price of an eternity of torments.

### *Third Point.*

9. The vile part of man, which is his body, and the senses, undergo so glorious a transformation, that those who in this life have merited to see and hear something of the other world, say that the vision of a

\* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

glorified body is of itself sufficient to employ the mind throughout eternity, and that, whereas but one word is enough to draw the soul out of the body, with extremity of delight, therefore, in this gathering of souls without number in that royal chapel where all are chanting the *Sanctus, Sanctus*, what delights must there not be? For all are but as nothing and a shadow, and if God did not stretch forth His hand and cause this miracle, by which the soul, seeing the Divine Essence face to face, retains its reason and the capability of deriving enjoyment from the senses, they would not be of any use to it, not be able to help it to see and hear any more than though it were a dead body. That uncreated light is what the rational appetite essentially demands; that alone satisfies the heart, born only for this owner and for this delight, *Satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua*—"I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear."\* There the Blessed will see and taste such infinite delights, that their whole soul and mind will be overwhelmed by them. All that is sweet, good, rich, glorious, they enjoy, possess, adore, and love. Let us, moreover, consider that the soul, when entering upon this glorious feast, will be divested of its garment, if it presents itself in ragged attire, and with the sole desire to be rendered immortal, rich, and happy in this blessed life alone, and will be clothed with the wedding garment of the pure love of God, and will entirely forget self, perceiving nothing but that God is, lives, and reigns. Then he will break forth into praises and songs of rejoicing at all that he

\* Psalm xvi. 15.

beholds. This is what the soul will have to learn all through its life from those masters of pure love, and it must begin by performing through faith those deeds of love here, which will be continued hereafter, and which must be done solely because God is what He is, and without any other motive than that of giving Him pleasure.

10. There let the soul enter for a season into a discussion with its inferior portion, which is sensuality, and let it ask it why it so tyrannizes over it, and uses such violence, in order that the soul, its mistress, should forget the Kingdom and the glory for which it was created; and should think of nothing but pleasing the flesh, aggrandizing its name, and enriching its family during the few years that it will have to remain in this life. Let it say to it, that if it do so in order to escape the troubles, poverty, and lesson of a penitent life, it should remember that its acts burn for ever in eternal pains, very different in every respect from those from which it flies; if it be to obtain happiness and enjoyment, that even here it ought to deprive itself of what is but vain illusion, in order to have those which God keeps for those who love Him. Lastly, that not being able to deserve both, this being an impossible thing that the irrational appetite desires, we should give up that which ends with death that we may enjoy that which lasts for ever.



## CHAPTER II.

## THE ILLUMINATIVE WAY.

## SECOND WEEK.

*Observation.*

THE light which comes to the soul through this pathway of Christ, the Sun of Justice, attentively observed in the mysteries of His mortal life, is the cause of its being called the *path*; because from these mysteries, as from celestial signs, occult influences and clear light descend into our understanding, engendering virtues and giving light to the soul. This second way is divided into two brief periods. The first is occupied with examples of the childhood of Christ; the second with the different parts of His Passion and Death. In these two weeks the anxious desires and petitions of the soul must be those which were continually uttered by St. Francis, "Lord, let me know myself, and let me know Thee;" because by means of these two kinds of knowledge the shadows which darkened the soul are dispelled.

## MONDAY.

## MEDITATION I.—OF THE TWO OPPOSING STANDARDS.

*First Point.*

1. The ignorance in which the soul was living, as regarded its sins and the four last things, being dispelled, the first things it has to observe in this new

world to which God has called it are two opposing nations, with their two armies, and their two captains, beneath whose banners all the human race is forced to fight; for this is our life, *Militia est vita hominis super terram*—"The life of man upon earth is a warfare,"\* as holy Job says. One of these captains is Christ, and the other Lucifer. Having, then, to fight beneath one or the other of these two standards, it is necessary, in order not to make a mistake in so great a matter, to be able to distinguish between the two opposing camps, to understand the nature and qualities of the combatants, the cause of the war, the obligations laid upon the one and the other army; the arms with which they fought, the wages paid them, the dangers to which they are exposed, and the triumphs they are expecting.

2. The soul finds, then, that Lucifer is the dragon which rebelled in Heaven against God, and, in his presumption and daring, attempting to make himself equal unto God, was conquered in Heaven, and came thence to earth, filled with anger and inextinguishable hatred against the Son of God—the cause of his ruin, in that he did not intend to adore Him. From that time the prince of this world has been striving to persuade ignorant men to imitate his pride, and indulge in carnal delights, and worship interest. This is the commander-in-chief; he who is the cause of the war, he who gives weapons to his soldiers, and whose wages is a filthy pleasure enveloped by a sea of bitterness and gall—a vain and brief renown, and the end of all, eternal fire. The host which follows this

\* Job vii. 7.

standard, and opposes whatever Christ our Lord has taught—flying from it as from madness, and prison, and torment, and abhorring the servants of the Cross, upon whom it makes cruel war—is the whole world, which, as St. John says, has enlisted itself beneath the standard of this malignant spirit, *Totus mundus in maligno positus est*—"The whole world is seated in darkness."\*

3. Let us consider, first, and with great grief, how innumerable are the souls which follow this standard, without knowing for whom, or against whom, they fight, or what torments they suffer, or what happiness they lose, or to what penalties they condemn themselves. Weeping bitterly over them, and at the same time being full of gratitude that it is on the side of the just, let the soul give thanks to Him who, without any merit of its own, drew it to Himself even, as it were, by the hair of the head.

4. Let us reflect what the wages of the dragon is, that it is not he who gives honours, or delights; that none of these things are his, but only the fire of hell, though he makes the simple believe that he can bestow upon them honours and pleasures, these being the things which they seek at the persuasion of this serpent with the utmost trouble and anguish, even as the Hebrew slaves sought straw and stubble wherewith to build houses for the Egyptians.

#### *Second Point.*

5. Christ, the Captain of the just, our natural Lord, bore the Cross on Calvary against the enemies

1 St. John v. 19.

of the soul, pride, avarice, and sensual pleasures. The cause of the war is that Lucifer wishes to tempt us to his kingdom by means of deceit and sensual pleasures, and desires through envy to deprive us of Heaven. We ought, therefore, to have one sole aim in view, namely, to destroy our enemy—sensual life; for His Majesty, seeing the insane love which we bear for that which would bring us to eternal death, calls us to the Cross and death, speaking that we may so understand; and knowing as He does that in the Cross is the palm of victory, and in the destruction of the passions is life. The wages we receive from Him is a good conscience, and the reward of the battle a crown and eternal happiness.

6. Let us next consider the conditions and qualities of our General, Who is God. And here, where there is so much to say, we will only decide upon His loving treatment, His liberality, His valour, and recall to mind that the victory of those who fight under His banner is certain. Happy army whose captain cannot be conquered, whose soldiers are always conquerors, if, like traitors, they do not desire to desert, to their confusion, to the standard of the enemy.

7. Secondly, we must consider the way in which He treats His soldiers, as though they were Himself, and not even with as much severity, since His Majesty bears all the weight of the battle, enters first into the battle, and leaves the enemy so disarmed and defeated, and so solitary and poor, that he has not even a bed to die on, or a garment to cover him, or linen for his shroud, or

six feet of earth in which to be buried. Having done this, He offers to us in reward for some mere nothing which we have performed, to our own profit, against our enemies, the flesh and pride, crowns of glory—nay, more, He gives them to us. Yet spite of all this, human hearts are benumbed and betake themselves in crowds, without understanding, to the camp of the enemy, despising Him Who has come to rescue them from his tyranny.

*Third Point.*

8. The motives which our Lord places before us in order that we should not range ourselves beneath the standard of the enemy are very strong. The first is, *Qui non accipit crucem suam et sequitur me, non est me dignus*—"He that taketh not up his cross and followeth Me, is not worthy of Me."\* That is to say, that He will not recognize him as one of His chosen, which is the greatest of evils, since if a creature be without God, what would it import him, even if all created beings were subject to him? The second, *Qui sequitur me, non ambulat in tenebris, sed habebit lumen vitæ*—"He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life."\* Therefore, by not following Him, as they indeed do not, the children of this world are blind, which is a sorrowful thing; and the unfortunate think of nothing but pleasures and honours, not giving heed to faith, which teaches them that all this is but vanity and lies. The children of light raise themselves towards their Sun, and are conscious of the happy and blessed

\* St. Matt. x. 38.

† St. John viii. 12.

end which awaits them. The third, *Quid prodest homini si universum mundum lucretur, animæ vero suæ detrimentum patiatur?*\* What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world—to make himself master of the world, with all its honours, pleasures, and riches—if he condemns his soul, which is the mistress of the house, for which the whole universe has been made, to suffer for ever? The fourth, *Filius hominis venturus est in gloria Patri sui, et reddet unicuique secundum opera sua*—"The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father, and then will He render to every man according to his works."† After having finished their course here, the children of this world will be conquered and meet their death at the hands of their Supreme Judge, and be sentenced in those words, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

9. Some Christians there are who hear this and desire to follow Christ, but make no endeavour to do so; others take such means as seem sufficient to them, and as are not opposed to their vainglory or their sensuality, but not having recourse to the means commanded by God, they are lost. Others yield to light and reason and follow their Captain, Jesus Christ, with uncovered face, fighting for their King in conformity to His orders, to the death.

10. Amongst these few we must endeavour to be numbered. We must fight against the enemies of God without being ashamed of belonging to Him, deeming it an honour to serve beneath His standard. Combating valiantly against the hosts of the enemy,

\* St. Matt. xvi. 26.

† St. Matt. xvi. 27.

ambitions, profanities, splendours, revenges, impurities, abominations, and idols, which the children of night adore like vile slaves.

### TUESDAY.

MEDITATION II.—ON THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY  
AND THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD.

#### *First Point.*

1. God sent His Archangel St. Gabriel, one of the great ones of His Kingdom, to impart to the Blessed Virgin our Lady, His eternal counsel, and to ask her consent. The Archangel, forming for himself a body out of the air, went to Nazareth, and before the rising of the sun entered the oratory where the Blessed Virgin was pondering over those words of Isaias, *Ecce Virgo concipiet et pariet filium*—"Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son,"\* and already beholding in her his Queen, he saluted her with such reverence and such significant words, that she was disconcerted and unable to maintain her wonted familiar intercourse with heavenly beings, being moreover overcome with fear, knowing not what to think; then the Angel said to her, "Fear not Mary, for thou hast found grace with God; behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His Father, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever."

\* Isaias vii. 14.

2. First, we must consider the season wherein He Who is the Supreme Good determined to bestow upon us the greatest of benefits, namely, when the world knew Him least, when it was doing Him the greatest injuries, and was least mindful of praying to Him and giving Him thanks. Here let our timid and fainting hearts begin to know and embrace a truth which touches it very nearly; namely, that when His Majesty wills to grant mercy, nothing can hinder Him. Let the soul take root in this thought and in the midst of all its failures and discouragements it will be greatly inspirited, even as though it had drank draughts of water from those bowels of mercy.

3. Our distrust and tepidity in praying to Him and importuning Him day and night alone prevent Him from visiting us, seeing that He has so strong a motive for doing us good, which is His own goodness united with an infinite inclination. Here, then, the soul may begin to argue—My Lord, if Thy mercy is not withdrawn because of any miseries, but on the contrary searches for them in order to find employment for its infinite compassion; who is there in the whole world more miserable than myself, who so weak, so badly wounded?

4. Secondly, let the time be considered when the Angel arrived and gave her the message; namely, when she had withdrawn into retirement and was meditating upon the divine words. These exercises of reading and prayer God uses as channels for His mercies and gifts, and this law His Majesty ever observes. Let, then, the soul be filled with a great



appreciation of these means whereby rivulets of grace descend from Heaven, and let it observe with what distractions, entanglements, and occupations, Satan endeavours, like Holofernes, to destroy the channels of living water in the city of God, and let it be determined to fight against him and to betake itself to these heavenly means as the first of its occupations, in order that it may not thirst for the dirty water which it drinks in the senses.

5. Thirdly, let us consider each word in those three sentences, "full of grace," "the Lord is with thee," and "blessed art thou among women." And with the delight of a son, let the soul repeat them as if it had itself been chosen to bear the message to her.

*Second Point.*

6. The Angel took from the humble Queen the perturbation and fear which the loftiness of his salutation had caused her, and then she asked of him, *Quomodo fiet istud, quoniam virum non cognosco?*—"How shall this be done, because I know not man?"\* He answered her that the Holy Ghost had taken upon Himself the office, and would overshadow her in her purity, in order that from her flower should proceed the fruit of life, and that from her example it might be seen that with God nothing is impossible. Whereupon she gave him the reply so much desired, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word." From the word, "Fear not, Mary," the soul may learn to listen to interior voices. The demons cannot give peace to the soul when they

\* St. Luke i. 34.

speak, even though they were to utter divine things, but God never speaks without giving peace to the soul, although He corrects it and reprimands it for its faults, according to the words, *Loquetur pacem in plebem suam*—"He will speak peace unto His people."\* *Cogitationes pacis et non afflictionis*—"Thoughts of peace and not of affliction."†

7. Let the soul consider that Heaven listens favourably to the questions of the humble, when they are not uttered for the sake of prying into divine secrets or resisting the will of God, but only in order that it may be better executed. Hence we must learn not to fix our eyes on anything, or to desire likewise of God anything more than how and in what manner we can best fulfil His most holy will.

8. Let the soul consider the effect produced by the mercies of Heaven, seeing that when the Blessed Virgin was told that she was to be the Mother of God and Queen of all creatures, she received the message with, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord;" for well did that beautiful soul know that the most holy God had chosen her, because He desired to make use of her for the great business which Heaven had taken in hand. This is a lesson we have to learn throughout many years, namely, to yield ourselves up as slaves to the will of Him Whose we are already by so many titles, in order that His divine will may find no resistance in us, but only the most supreme joy and astonishment that God should deign to give His commands to a creature so vile, and the most extreme astonishment that He should forget so

\* Psalm lxxxiv. 9.

† Jeremias xxix. 11.

many injuries done to Him, and should desire to shed His celestial gr  ce into so filthy a vase.

*Third Point.*

9. As soon as the Blessed Virgin had given her consent the Angel departed, and the Eternal Word deposited Himself in the fruitful chamber of Mary, with our humanity, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, to Whom the Angel attributed that work, although it was effected by the most Holy Trinity, and Who formed out of the purest blood a body which, though very small, was very perfect, and created a most perfect soul, uniting them with the Second Person of the most Holy Trinity, whence came the God-Man, Jesus Christ our Lord. In uniting Himself with the heavenly Being, the Divinity filled it with grace and glory, and the Holy Spirit heaped together in His breast all Its gifts and treasures. He saw in one and the same moment the Divine Essence, and it was given Him to choose whether He would have the glorious body due to His Person, or a mortal body in order to redeem us together with Him, and He chose the passible flesh that He might give pleasure to His Father, and take us out of the state of condemnation and make us sons of God by adoption.

10. We should consider deeply how the Soul of Christ humbled Itself before His Divinity; on beholding Itself chosen and raised to the throne and made natural Ruler over all creatures, and yet on that day was sunk in the abyss of Its nothing, and looked upon as a worm and the refuse of men.

Nor is it any wonder that the Soul of Christ was filled with God before Whom all that is created appears that which it is; and in the same degree as they draw near to God all creatures annihilate themselves, in order that God may be known and honoured in them. On the other hand, the children of pride are cast away with anger from the face of God, their hearts being filled with the desire for self-aggrandizement, and having no regard for the glory of God.

11. Let us consider that most ardent affection with which He loved us, as soon as that He saw it pleased His Father that He should redeem us, determining instantly to shed His Blood, and give up His life and honour to release us from the servitude in which the devil holds us.

12. Let us ponder upon the shrine of Mary during those nine months, in which the Lamb of God was enshrined in its golden frame, adored by man and Angels. How rich it was, how full of light and clothed with the sun, adored and desired by all creatures with a thousand acts of joy and thanksgiving, when they beheld her raised to the majesty of Mother of God.

#### WEDNESDAY.

##### MEDITATION III.—ON THE VISITATION OF OUR LADY.

###### *First Point.*

1. The Blessed Virgin being certain through the revelation of the Angel of the pregnancy of her cousin, and being inspired most strongly by the Child-God Who was the heart of her soul, *Exurgens*

*Maria, abiit in montana cum festinatione*, and Mary rising up went into the hill country with haste to offer her congratulations, to sanctify her house, and to justify the child John.

2. Let us consider, first, that God is more solicitous for our redemption than we are ourselves, and that His love moves Him more than do our prayers. When His Majesty bestows light, whereby to recognize some rays of the infinite love He bears us, the soul is renewed in such a manner that it seems no longer what it was before, but as if it had found a treasure, it sees itself enriched with all manner of riches. "What love God bears me!" it exclaims. "What solicitude my poverty and misery give Him! He would descend again to suffer for me, if the first payment had not sufficed? What do I fear? Of what am I in doubt? My salvation is certain. Shall I not repay Him all that He asks, since He does not require it for Himself? For He has no need of me, except to do me good." To see itself loved for the sake of love, and to offer all it has to one who loves it well, gives great strength to the wise soul.

3. Secondly, we must consider the violence of His love, what obstacles it will overcome in order to do us good. He did not hesitate to disturb the meditations of His Mother, nor was He prevented by the delicacy of the maiden, or the roughness of the road, or because she was already the Mother of God, and the cousin a servant. Here the soul may be overwhelmed with the thought whether there be any adequate reason why God should employ means so much to His cost, to do good to souls, and to show in what esteem He

holds them, seeing that He took no heed of any obstacles, or want of authority, or trouble, in comparison with doing them good. Moreover, that it was this which moved Him to have recourse to a means so astonishing and foreign to all conception of Majesty, as that of remaining here to be the Bread of souls, in order to give them life, joy, and consolation.

4. We must consider, thirdly, the recollection in which the Blessed Virgin pursued her journey, and that the occupations which God gives us, when they are undertaken in order to serve and obey His Majesty, do not hinder recollection, or the desire to please God in them, but that when the eyes of the soul turn aside to any self-interest or pleasure, then only the water becomes turbid, and the heart disturbed and unquiet, and the interior light vanishes. Here we must observe, that when the Blessed Virgin went along the road with her Child, she thought of little but that she was bearing God with her, and forgetting also the cares and pleasures of this world, thought only of those of Heaven. This same recollection of God is what is signified by David when he says, *In terra deserta, et invia, et inaquosa, sic in sancto apparui tibi*—"In a desert land, and where there is no way and no water, so in the sanctuary have I come before Thee."\*

*Second Point.*

5. Having entered the house of her cousin, our Lady saluted her. The salutation would consist in the words, "May God be in thy house," because this was in effect what the Blessed Virgin did, for she

\* Psalm lxii. 3.

filled the mother and the child John with God. On hearing the words of our Lady, the infant John leaped with joy in his mother's womb, turning himself to adore the Sun which came in the pure cloud of Mary, and had given to him light and grace. St. Elizabeth told the Blessed Virgin all she had felt, and recognizing the mystery of the Incarnation, she exclaimed in her astonishment, *Et unde hoc mihi ut veniat mater Domini mei ad me? Ecce enim ut facta est vox salutationis tuæ in auribus meis, exsultavit præ gaudio infans in utero meo: Beata, quæ credidisti*—"And whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed art thou who hast believed."\* And here may be suggested many delightful affections. On the day of communion, we may say with St. Elizabeth—"Whence is this that the Lord comes to my poor dwelling?" Herein is much to excite in the soul admiration of the great remedy provided by God, in descending gloriously from Heaven to give light and nourishment and life to us; and next, it will be excited to supreme astonishment at itself for not desiring such a great remedy, or esteeming it, or allowing itself to be cured.

6. Another affection, especially when we communicate, is to desire that the Blessed Virgin should prevent us with her salutation, and in order to this, we should argue with her, and bring forward a thousand reasons to prove to her that it will cost her nothing more

\* St. Luke i. 43—45.

than to speak in this our poor dwelling, that we who are so poor may be enriched by her words, she having taken us for her slaves. With any other words which the interior affection may suggest, whereby to persuade her to turn and say to us, "May God be in this house," and then our souls, like St. John's, will leap with pleasure.

7. Another affection is, *Beata quæ credidisti*—"Blessed art thou that hast believed." Seeing that such exalted favours are attributed to the faith of Mary, we must strengthen our faith, and believe in the goodness of our Lord, and trust that He will draw us out of this pit, wherein we are given a prey to so many puerile affections, which we know to be vain, praying Him to restore us to the liberty and light of His children.

*Third Point.*

8. All this point must be devoted to meditation upon the verses of the *Magnificat*, whereby we must excite in ourselves loving affections towards our Lady, uniting ourselves through love with her, and giving thanks for the works performed in her by the Holy Ghost, exclaiming with her, *Et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo, quia respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ*—"And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid."\* And so on with the other verses, which are full of sweetness.

\* St. Luke i. 47, 48.



## THURSDAY.

## MEDITATION IV.—ON THE BIRTH OF CHRIST OUR LORD.

*First Point.*

1. Octavius sent forth a decree that the whole world should be enrolled. St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, obeying the edict, came from Nazareth to Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David. They arrived, says St. Bridget, at ten o'clock at night, and because there was no room for him and the Blessed Virgin in the inns, seeing that they were all full, they were obliged to betake themselves to a stable outside the city, after which St. Joseph returned to Jerusalem to fetch a light and other things. Then our Lady, being in the stable, took off her veil, and knelt down to pray, and remained in ecstasy until midnight.

2. Let the first reflection on this point be, how our Lord makes use of the intentions of His creatures, even when they are injurious, in order to execute His infallible decrees, without allowing it to seem anything but chance, as in the edict put forth by Cæsar, which served the divine decree, although it appeared as if it were but by chance that His Son was born in Bethlehem. Out of this reflection springs a great light, showing the happy soul that if in all things it casts itself into the arms of Divine Providence, no creatures can harm it, and that the very means which they take for doing it an injury will be used by God for its good, and thus it lives without fear, comprehending well the meaning of the phrase,

*Qui habitat in adjutorio Altissimi, in protectione Dei cæli commorabitur*—"He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High, shall abide under the protection of the God of Heaven."\* On the other hand, the ignorant soul, deceived by the blind love which it has for itself, and not knowing whether the very next day it will not be attacked by the infirmity of death, and having no power wherewith to defend itself from any danger, does not desire, and will not have recourse to, the remedy of putting its trust in God; but, as if its Lord wished to do it evil, desires to rule itself by its own judgment, and therefore falls at every moment into holes and muddy places.

3. Secondly, let us consider how the Queen Mother went knocking at the doors of all creatures, asking for a corner in their houses, without finding one worthy of such noble guests, and how an empty, wretched stable received them. In like manner, she returns in spirit year by year, with her Son, to ask for a corner in our hearts and finds them all occupied, for this so great treasure still remains unrecognized, and then she leaves those who like Gentiles keep their feasts with sensuality, laughter, plays, and riots, and betakes herself to the poor empty soul which deems itself to be unworthy of so infinite a good, and there Mary lays down her Lamb, and there is fulfilled what she sang, *Esurientes implevit bonis, et divites dimisit inanes*—"He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away."†

4. Let us consider, thirdly, the peace and calmness with which the holy spouses, on seeing that it was not

\* Psalm xc. 1.

† St. Luke i. 53.

the will of God that they should find a place in the city, went without the gate, and that there, as if it were the Holy of Holies, the Blessed Virgin betook herself to prayer. In this is contained the essence of spirituality—to live always in the royal palace of the will of God, wherein the soul employs itself in raising all its thoughts and intentions to this, the highest of all goods, in which it remains firm as a rock, always serene, always at peace and happy, and in fine, has everything that it can desire.

*Second Point.*

5. St. Joseph being absent, and the Blessed Virgin in ecstasy, unconscious of all outward things, when midnight came, the Eternal Son penetrated through the womb of His Mother, even as a ray of the sun enters through a glass window without breaking it. And so the Son of God entered into the world, fell upon the ground, felt the cold, and began to weep. Then the Blessed Virgin came to herself, and seeing that He was born, prostrated herself, and adored Him, saying, *Bene veneris Dominus meus, Deus meus, et filius meus.* She took Him in her arms, and pressed Him to her breast, but as she was herself chilled with cold, her Son did not cease to tremble. Then she unfolded the swaddling clothes, and wrapped Him in them, making of the straw a bed in the manger, and laying Him therein, next to an ox which was being taken to sacrifice, in order that He might receive warmth from its breath, because the Child, feeling the cold, wept. He was there when St. Joseph returned with a light, and looking through the gate,

he saw a light brighter than the sun, and entering, found that God was born, and adored Him.

6. Let us first consider that this new birth takes place spiritually every succeeding year in the souls which dispose themselves for it; and much more let us consider the most humble Heart of Jesus and the infinite inclination He had to humiliate Himself, since even now that He is in glory He deigns to abase Himself still lower than even to the stable, seeing that He condescends to enter our filthy hearts through love of our souls. Here we must excite affections of prayer, supplicating Him that as He then consecrated the stable, and made it a sanctuary, and filled it with light and the songs of Angels, He will make use of our soul whenever He descends from Heaven, that He will sanctify and fill it with light and the knowledge of His infinite mercy.

7. Let us consider, secondly, that the wisdom of God chose, in order to come into the world, out of all that there is in it, a stable, straw, emptiness, poverty, a carpenter for a reputed father, a poor woman for His Mother; all of which human wisdom would not have chosen. And now let the soul see how it deceives itself. Oh, miserable as it is, how it is dazzled with the splendour of gold, of silk, and of all kinds of puerile vanities, being deficient in reason and understanding, fancying that it possesses something, and yet it has nothing, for its whole treasure consists in rejecting all these things, and making itself poor and like unto Jesus.

8. Let us consider, thirdly, that Infinite Majesty concealed in the body of an infant wrapped in

swaddling clothes, and trembling with cold, and see whether we can comprehend and realize two extremities so distant from each other. This it was which struck St. Augustine with such amazement, and made him exclaim, "God Man, God Child," as though he had said, "God Man, Who is wrapped in swaddling clothes, Who weeps from pain, Who trembles with cold, Who sinks from hunger, Who dies from love, God a Child." Having thus formed some conception of the deity and sovereignty of God, and how the powers of Heaven tremble before Him, seeing Him now in the midst of so great humiliation, where is the pride, even if it were as great as that of Lucifer, which would not sink into the lowermost depths even of hell itself.

*Third Point.*

9. At the same moment that God was born, an Angel came and stood by some shepherds who were in the same country, watching their flocks, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And he said to them, "Fear not, for I bring you tidings of great joy, that shall be to all people. For this day is born to you a Saviour. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger." And suddenly there was with the Angel, a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of goodwill."

10. Let us consider, first, how Christ came to the poor, the labouring, and the simple, and shunned making Himself known to the nobles, the wise, and

the rich of Jerusalem. And let us recall to mind, in addition to all this, those words which His Majesty afterwards spoke, and which are so worthy our meditation, *Confiteor tibi, Pater, quia abscondisti hæc a sapientibus et prudentibus, et revelasti ea parvulis*—"I confess to Thee, O Father, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones."\* It is a wonderful proof of the displeasure of Christ against the wise of this world, that He not only deprived them of light, but gave thanks to His Father for having done so. And be it observed, that littleness and poverty do not consist in the state in which we are born, but in divesting the soul of all affection for it, and of presuming on account of it to despise those who are our inferiors, and who are really greater than we. Moreover, His Majesty leaves us at liberty to make ourselves poor and small, that we may enjoy the light of Heaven, and if we see that our condition prevents us from doing this, let us hasten to abhor it with vehement hatred, that we may enjoy that which is true grandeur.

11. Secondly, let us consider the attribution made by the Angels, of glory to God and peace to men of goodwill. They thereby show to us wherein consists the peace so greatly desired by the soul, and that it is not to be found in our appetites, but in giving glory to God, for He alone merits it, and His glory is real, and in it alone are our peace and joy to be found.

12. Let us consider, thirdly, the delight and joy of the Angels when God, *Nusquam angelos apprehendit*

\* St. Matt. xi. 25.

*sed semen Abrahamæ*—"Did not take hold of the Angels, but of the seed of Abraham."\* Then they sang with gladness, and came to give man congratulations upon the honour God had bestowed upon him, by raising his natural littleness to the throne. Let us learn this noble characteristic of the heavenly beings, and rejoice in the welfare of our brethren and in their prosperity, making their happiness our own through the love and pleasure we have in it.

## FRIDAY.

## MEDITATION V.—ADORATION OF THE MAGI.

*First Point.*

1. God being born, He sent His star to Arabia, which was east of Jerusalem, and there three wise men saw it, who were descended from Balaam, and also knew the prophecy, *Orietur stella ex Jacob*—"A star shall arise out of Jacob."† And they said one to another, *Hoc signum magni regis est, eamus, et offeramus ei munera*—"This is the star of the great King, let us go and offer Him gifts;" and taking with them gold, frankincense, and myrrh, they departed in search of the King of Heaven.

2. Let us first consider what this star represented, namely, interior inspirations, which are the rays of this Sun of Justice, sent in order to withdraw us from the sterile region of our sensuality and appetites, and to raise us to see and converse with God, and be filled with wonder that a material light should draw towards Him three Gentile Kings, who might have had so

\* Hebrews ii. 16.

† Numbers xxiv. 17.

many doubts of who and what it was, and yet they immediately trusted in it, and felt that they must not quit their search until they had found God; whilst we have not desired to trust in the divine calls sent us by God, which we know to be from Him, which cannot deceive us, and which we are certain have power to raise us to God, and yet, spite of all this, we have taken no heed of them. This goodness without limit should excite still greater wonder in us, seeing that, after having extinguished so many lights, and having displeased God so often by our resistance to His calls, we have never yet been able, in our malice, to quench His pity and long suffering, but on the contrary, He still persists in such a manner as to oblige us to follow His call, even though it be in spite of ourselves. The soul may find in all these reflections, great material for praising, esteeming, and wondering at the charity of God, in dragging us miserable creatures to Himself, and saying, "I have loved thee with an eternal love, and therefore have I had compassion upon thee."

3. Let us consider, secondly, how, of all the multitude which beheld the star and heard the prophecy, and witnessed the example given by the Wise Men, and the wondrous and terrible manner in which the star went before them, only those three men followed it. Many are the called and few the chosen; these are secrets of the divine election. Then we must endeavour to excite an affection of holy fear, saying with David, *Ne projicias me a facie tua*—"Cast me not away from Thy face."\* What do I merit, O Lord,

\* Psalm l. 13.



but that Thou shouldst reject me as many times as I have rejected Thee for the sake of the vilest things, of which nothing but eternal confusion has remained to me, but *Non secundum peccata quæ fecimus nos, sed secundum magnam misericordiam tuam*—"Not according to the sins which we have committed, but according to Thy great mercy" be it done unto me.

4. Thirdly, we must reflect upon the many difficulties these Wise Men overcame, leaving their own country in order to go to foreign lands, without knowing whither nor to what distance; moreover, being Kings, to have to recognize another King of another nation; whereas all these obstacles only had the effect of making them take a courageous determination. But oh, how many fears, how many obstacles do flesh and blood find in quitting this life, and in relinquishing the estimation in which we hold it and its pretensions. Let the soul remember that if it deliver itself up to God, all that it has to do is to let His Majesty work in it, and let it also recollect that His aim is nothing else but that of ameliorating it in everything, and making it eternal, and delivering it out of the bonds by which it is confined. Happy the soul which confides in God, and resolves to follow Him with its whole heart.

*Second Point.*

5. The Wise Men having arrived at Jerusalem, the star disappeared, and they entered the city, asking for the King Who had been born, and Whose star they had seen in the east. Then Herod was troubled, and inquired of the Scribes, who answered him in the

words of the Prophet, *Et tu, Bethlehem, terra Juda, nequaquam minima es in principibus Juda: ex te enim exiet dux qui regat populum meum Israel*—"And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come forth the Captain that shall rule My people Israel."\* Then Herod sent them to Bethlehem, and commanded that after having adored Him they should return to tell him, pretending that he likewise would go and adore Him.

6. Let us first consider that the Kings did not lose heart because the star had failed them, nor look upon themselves as deceived, nor did they sorrow over it, or think of returning, but solely of having recourse to the only means remaining to them, namely, of making inquiry from those who dwelt in the land. Hence the soul learns a great lesson, that being sure of the truth of a thing, seeing that it has been revealed to it by a light from Heaven, it resolves to fly such and such temptation, to follow such and such manner of life, and such and such exercise of virtue, even although the light be hidden (for it is often hidden when God desires to prove what we will do in His absence), and not be dismayed, or lose strength, or fail in its promises, but ask of those who lead a spiritual life in this land of promise, what God will answer by them.

7. Secondly, we must consider the hardness of heart and the malice of the princes and Scribes, who, hearing of the greatest marvel in the world, and that three idolaters from foreign lands had come to adore

\* St. Matt. ii. 6.

their Messias, and not only that, but they themselves told them where He was to be found, they were, nevertheless, not moved thereby. Always then, when we see any one forsaken by God, and who, perchance, did not merit it so much as me, let it excite in our hearts sentiments of gratitude towards Him, saying, *Benedic anima mea Domino: et omnia quæ intra me sunt nomini sancto ejus*—"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name."\*

8. Finally, let us consider the desire to please Kings, which blinded the reason of the Scribes, so that having the full light of the sun in their eyes, they shut them fast that they might not see. This inordinate affection, which ought to make worldly souls tremble, must be destroyed once for all, for it often exposes them to the risk of losing themselves, and of seeking to twist the law of God into accordance with the pleasures of their King instead of acting in a contrary manner. In Herod was seen the fury of the ambition of reigning in opposition to the King of Heaven, Who created the stars and the kingdom, and although he knew, by means of the Law, that the Messias was God, he resolved to slay Him Who was the Lord of the lives of all and of his own—and by what blind, cruel, and violent means! This king of our appetites must be taken to the crib and immolated in sacrifice to the Child-God.

### *Third Point.*

9. Having received their answer, they went forth from the city whither they had been guided by

\* Psalm cii. 1.

Heaven, and were filled with great joy on seeing the star reappear. They followed it until it stood over where the Child was—*supra ubi erat puer*. Then they entered within the gate, and falling down, adored the Child-King and offered Him gifts. They remained some days there, learning from the Ruler of Heaven the mystery of our redemption, and then, rich in faith, hope, and charity, went back another way to their own country, as the Angel of the Lord commanded them. Let us reflect upon the succession which God observes with souls, plunging them now in light and now in darkness, in order that in darkness their virtues may increase, and that in light they may acquire fresh vigour and see new things. On this point, the soul must follow the example set by holy Job, *Et rursum post tenebras spero lucem*—"And after darkness, I hope for light again."\* We must also meditate upon what the Magi thought when the star led them from the palace of a King to a stable, and through such alternatives we also pass, when imagining that the spirit is raising us to a sublime life and to divine knowledge, instead of this it brings us into a contempt of ourselves and of all things, and to a desire for troubles and sufferings, because God is of a truth to be found there, but not in the esteem and aggrandizement of self.

10. Lastly, let us consider that in the presence of God all crowns and earthly grandeur fall down, and appear what they really are, but dung and filth. And with how little horror and disgust a stable and a crib need inspire us, when the God Whom we seek makes

\* Job xvii. 12.

of them Heaven, whence we must excite in ourselves a desire to have Him in our hearts, improving our own blindness. If we desire glory, where is it to be found if not where God is? If riches, what treasure is equal to God? If content, it is all shut up in God. Why then should we follow shadows, after having found that we have been so greatly mocked at by them? Come, my soul, to the dung and filth, and let us quit lies, and embrace Him in Whom is the supreme good of the soul.

#### SATURDAY.

MEDITATION VI.—ON THE PURIFICATION OF OUR LADY.

##### *First Point.*

1. The Blessed Virgin remained in retirement in the stable, during the forty days commanded by the Law when the new-born child was a son, and then she went to purify herself in the Temple, and offer to God her first-born Son.

2. Let us consider the humility of the Son and the Mother, who, although they were both of them exempted from the Law by express words, were desirous of observing it, to such detriment of the esteem due to their royal persons as to afford a plea for God to be looked upon as an ordinary child, and for the most pure Virgin to be regarded as requiring purification. What a lesson here for those whose hearts are swelled with vanity, and who thirst for the adoration and esteem of men, desiring to appear and to be more than they are, and this they think is to rise, not remembering that the esteem of men is but empty air,

and that they attain nothing by it but disgrace and to be forsaken by God.

3. Let us consider that, although they were not bound thereto by the Law, the Mother and the Son knew it would be more in accordance with the good pleasure of God that they should observe its ordinances, and that, at the cost of their credit, they should give an example of obedience and of religion, whilst not to give it would afford a pretext whereby to form a rash judgment. And here the soul may find much matter for meditation with regard to the looking not only at the pleasure of God, but at His *greater* pleasure, because in this consists the purity of the soul, the delight of the spiritual life, the increase in virtues, and the opening to our Lord a gate whereby He may enter in and fill the soul with consolations.

4. Let us consider the pleasure experienced by the Blessed Virgin in those days of recollection and retirement, and picture to ourselves the most trifling actions of the new Mother, when she was dressing her Child and giving Him milk, and let us try to realize the innumerable motives of love by which she could be influenced in serving and nourishing her Son and her God, how she would fix her gaze upon Him, and how the Mother and Son would speak to one another with their eyes. If we meditate upon all this with attention, we shall find great delight in making our communions, seeing that it is the self-same Son of God Whom God the Father trusts to me, even as He trusted Him to the Blessed Virgin, and we shall be overpowered with feelings, now of astonishment, and

now of thankfulness, now of tenderness, and now of a desire always to be near Him.

*Second Point.*

5. The Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph took the Child to present Him in the Temple at Jerusalem. Simeon, the holy Priest, was there, sighing to receive the new-born God and to behold Him, even as he had been promised by the Holy Spirit, Who had revealed to him that he should see Him on the morrow. He was already in the Temple, expecting Him, when the Blessed Virgin entered with her Son in her arms, and he rose to receive them.

6. Let us consider the affection with which the Blessed Virgin was inspired, when she went to offer to God her first-born Son for the redemption of the world, and knowing that she offered Him to death, presented Him willingly, because such was the will of God. The soul ought to meditate here upon what love for the first born is, and how it is the greatest hindrance in the way of giving up all to God, and beholding how the Son of God gave Himself up wholly for our love, and the Blessed Virgin offered up everything she held dear with Him, it ought, although the offering is so unequal, to annihilate every affection whatever, in order that nothing may exist within it, excepting only the will and the good pleasure of God.

7. Let us consider the holy old man Simeon, how our Lord rewarded his sighs and prayers, and let it teach us to have recourse to the same powerful means with regard to everything that we cannot obtain of

ourselves. By prayer we can procure everything, as St. Paul says, *Omnia possum in eo, qui me confortat*—"I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me."\* For seeing that God is ever offering to the soul the assistance of His infinite power, and that it is so natural to the poor to ask, and since God is so rich in mercies, what is it which holds back the soul, when it is agonizing as it were in a temptation, and prevents it from praying and trusting that God will not forsake it?

8. Let us consider, lastly, the infinite liberality of God towards us, and how He is not content with giving us His Son once only as an agreeable offering, but that every time we communicate He places this treasure in our hands, that we may possess something that is worthy of esteem, that we may offer Him up as a satisfaction for our sins, as a thank-offering, and as a title whereby we may entreat of Him still further mercies; and to know this treasure is to gain much, therefore lukewarm and dejected souls lose much, whereas they might, if they knew the treasure which Heaven offers them, be very rich, but not knowing it, they lose all.

### *Third Point.*

9. The Priest took the Child in his arms, and seeing all his desires fulfilled, sang, *Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine*—"Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord."† And to the Blessed Virgin he announced the sword of grief with which her heart would be pierced when she should see her Son die. Then the Child was ransomed, the turtle doves were offered, and the Holy Family returned to Nazareth.

\* Philip. iv. 13.

† St. Luke ii. 29.



10. Let us reflect upon those words, *Accipit eum in ulnas suas*—"He took Him into his arms,"\* and consider what good reason Simeon had for refusing to die until he had held God in his arms. With this is connected a truth of great importance, namely, that until the soul holds God in its will and understanding, which are its two arms, it should beg of Him not to take it out of this world, but to make haste to release it from the dirt and filth with which it is laden, and which are all the things that it thinks of and holds commerce with, and cares for apart from God. Those words, *Tuam ipsius animam pertransibit gladius*—"Thine own soul a sword shall pierce,"† must lead us to consider how our Lord gives to us trials as the price of His mercies, and we must therefore learn to esteem trials in this life more than joys. There are many arguments by which the soul may be convinced how necessary trials are to it, namely, either because they excuse it from eternal suffering, or secure its crown, or enable it to increase in virtue, and above all, because God takes delight in the soul that is tried, for on such soil as this celestial rain falls, and causes it to bear fruit a hundred-fold.

#### SUNDAY.

#### MEDITATION VII.—ON THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

##### *First Point.*

1. An Angel appeared to St. Joseph in his sleep, and said to him, "Arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and fly into Egypt. For it will come

\* St. Luke ii. 28.

† St. Luke ii. 35.

to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him."

2. Let us reflect that persecution began as soon as Christ was born. The same thing takes place now when Christ is born in our souls. As soon as we love and desire to serve Him, the demon, who was once the tyrannical master of this soul, the daughter of God, is disturbed on seeing it restored to its natural King, and immediately endeavours to cast Him out of its heart; consequently, persecution, temptations, hindrances, and obstacles are sure to come, and, therefore, the Holy Spirit warns it, saying, *Fili accedens ad servitutem Dei, sta in justitia, et timore, et præpara animam tuam ad tentationem*—"Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation."\* It is very important to know this truth, in order that the soul may carefully preserve the desires of Heaven, that when new born they may not be overpowered by occupations, temptations, and carelessness, and the best way of escaping them is at once to fly from all occasions, for God does not desire to perform miracles, but wishes that we should fly from temptation, and learn not to expect miracles.

3. Let us reflect how watchful Heaven is over those who trust in God, how it turns to nought the plots and the violence of those who desire to do them harm. Hence we must learn to trust wholly in the providence of God, and although, owing to our natural ignorance and blindness, it seems death to do so, reason will correct such an opinion, for it

\* Ecclus. ii. 1.

knows how well defended are those whom God shelters, and that He shields those who give themselves up entirely into His arms.

4. Let us reflect upon all the anxiety which the Holy Child had to suffer for love of us, and that from the moment of His birth He did not allow Himself one hour of repose. What a couch, and what a palace was this in which to be born ! What pain He suffered in His circumcision ! Now that the Blessed Virgin comes to her own poor house, which, because it belonged to her, and was in her own city, might have given her some shelter, she is obliged to fly into Egypt, and taken as she is by surprise, to fly thither without any provision for the way. And herein reason has to combat nature, because of the horror which suffering and trials excite in it, and it must be persuaded that in these very things consists its liberty and its life, even in this state of being, if it can raise itself to that state of blessedness wherein God holds them worthy who suffer for His name. The soul who has delights in trials and thirsts for them is very pure, very enlightened, and very much beloved by God, and, as in this life no other fruits can be gathered by it, therefore will it always enjoy a perpetual feast.

*Second Point.*

5. St. Joseph communicated to our Lady the revelation, and then, obeying the order of the Angel, they departed for Egypt. Let us reflect that in many homes the most favoured souls occupy the lowest place. What lessons of humility are given us by the Queen of Heaven ! For she, being the Mother, and

her spouse no more than her guardian, her inferior in dignity and virtues, the order was not sent to her, but she was called upon to believe in and obey her spouse. What admiration ought it to excite in us when we see how the Mother of God received the command, not uttering a word of complaint that God had not imparted His will to her, not indulging in a single doubt as to the truth of what St. Joseph told her, but submitting herself entirely to whatever our Lord ordained by him, and that not only with the utmost calmness of soul, but with delight and joy that God had made known to her His will by such a medium. This is most difficult to the nature we have inherited from the dragon, for our vanity and pride will not suffer an inferior to command us, but all our activities are directed to keep every one else beneath us, to rule them and make them do our bidding, and, blind as we are, we fancy that in this consists greatness and glory, and we call the miserable slaves of Lucifer blessed, whose standard they follow, whose qualities they imitate, whose aim they have in view.

6. Let us reflect upon St. Joseph, and the new way which Heaven took in order to abase and confound him, for being as he was so humble, what must he not have felt on finding himself obliged by God to command his Creator and the Mother of his Lord. A new way was it, indeed, of humbling a humble soul, and which he alone who suffered it can explain. Here the soul finds an admirable proof, that when we know the will of God we must not go against it, in great or little matters, seeing that to do so would be to

convert humility into pusillanimity, and into a want of confidence in God Who commands us.

7. Let us reflect upon the two celestial spouses, and the command attended with so many difficulties on all sides. For they were oppressed with the fear of losing their Treasure, and that of the whole world. On the other side, they did not know what path to take in order to escape, nor did they possess property to enable them to pass their life in Egypt, nor had they time given them to seek it, and thus, in the deepest poverty, and surrounded by difficulties of all kinds, they departed, and still without murmurings or bickerings, albeit, it is no wonder they did so, for they bore God with them, and having Him, all troubles vanish.

8. This principle, which is clearer than the sun, must be the foundation on which we must build our spiritual life, "Where God is, there nothing is wanting." Let us rest in God, and we shall be content if everything we have in this world be taken from us, as it was from Job; but if God be wanting, what have we? Nothing but a mere appearance of good, and, on the other hand, real torments.

### *Third Point.*

9. They arrived at a place in Egypt where they took a small house, having nothing wherewith to furnish it, and no money. St. Joseph began to work in order to maintain the Mother and Child, and they remained there seven years, more or less.

10. This point is the one of most enjoyment and greatest substance of any to be found in these

mysteries, because here may be contemplated the life and actions of those three persons, which, when they are considered very attentively, are full of instruction and comfort.

11. Let us reflect how the Queen of Heaven tended her holy Child, how she dressed and laid Him in His cot, and watched over Him during His sleep. When He grew older, how she taught Him to speak, how she seated Him at table, how great confusion she felt in commanding Him, how He carried away the chips made by His father, how He played with other children, how He obeyed His Mother. Then let us ask ourselves, can any one leave that epitome of Heaven, after having learnt to contemplate the virtues of these three noble persons.

12. Let us consider God in human form, Who preserved within His breast all the treasures of God, together with His Divinity, and then reflect upon the manner in which He occupied Himself during these seven years, and afterwards during a space of twenty-three more years, when He might have performed so many miracles, and yet kept everything hidden and silent, employing Himself in giving the carpenter's plane to His master, or holding the saw. O depth of the divine counsels! What more astonishing examples of humility could His Majesty desire to give us, than in thus subjecting His Divine Person to the will of two of His creatures, rather than display His treasures.

13. Here we may find something to learn during the whole of our life, namely, to annihilate our own judgment and will, which strive to deify themselves,

and to subject them to the vilest creature in the world, if God commands it. Yet another light is also shed upon us from these actions, namely, that when God does not desire any more noble acts than the gathering of chips, a Son of God is content and well employed, and for such will leave the conversion of the world. For His Majesty has no need of great works, but only that we should give Him pleasure.

14. Let us reflect on the peace which these holy persons had in exile, and discover whence they had it, since they had nothing which could give it them, but only pain and suffering. Herein much matter for thought is afforded us, and we shall then find their peace had its origin in three things, in which the just place all their happiness and peace, and of which there is no person in the world that can deprive them—in the will of God, which is the heart of their life; in the presence of God, which is the light of their eyes; in the providence of God, which is their heritage, their primogeniture, and their riches. With this they find everywhere a country, friends, a treasure, a content, which will never leave them till they see God.

## THIRD WEEK.

## ON THE PASSION.

*Observations.*

Three brief acts must be made when entering upon these meditations, as has been laid down in the observations on the first way.

The first, to purify the intention, and to desire to seek only the pleasure of God whenever we betake ourselves to prayer, and not our own pleasure, or consolation, or light, but only what God desires, always looking upon the soul as unworthy of any favour whatever; let it then commence its meditations by signifying this in humble words, such as, *Domine, propitius esto mihi peccatori*—"O Lord, be merciful to me a sinner," and not daring to raise our eyes to the altar.

The second act is to imagine ourselves in presence of the mystery about to be considered, *e.g.*, to represent to ourselves Christ washing the feet of Judas and the rest, as if we were present at the act, making a profound reverence, before entering upon the meditation, and giving utterance to some such words as *Lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor*—"Wash me and I shall be made whiter than snow."\*

The third act, to know what it is we have to ask for during the whole Passion. Let it for instance be the virtue of humility, the virtue beloved by Christ, and very especially inculcated throughout the Passion, desiring to obtain by means of our petitions.

\* Psalm l. 9.



the annihilation of the appetite of praise, that idol of the soul, whence springs the blindness of our understanding, which is the root of our bitterness and the universal cause of all our falls and weaknesses.

### MONDAY.

#### MEDITATION VIII.—THE WASHING OF THE FEET.

##### *First Point.*

1. Christ having eaten of the Paschal Lamb, and observed all the ceremonies of the Law in order to bury them with honour, laid aside His garments, and girding Himself with a towel, took water in a basin and began to wash the feet of His Disciples. We may readily imagine that Judas would be the first, for as steward he had precedence of the others. Hereby a light enters the soul, enabling it to see of what nature are the treasures and grandeur of this new King, Whom David and the Church alike call, *Rex gloriæ, Domine virtutem*—"The King of Glory, the Lord strong and mighty."\* Therefore those who are nearest to the King and most nearly united with Him are the most filled with the like virtues, and they are those who humiliate themselves most and who cast themselves down at the feet of all.

2. By means of this light the affection of admiration first enters the soul, and it is founded upon what St. John says, *Sciens Jesus quia venit hora ejus, et quia omnia dedit ei Pater in manus*—"Jesus knowing that His hour was come, and that the Father had given

\* Psalm xxiii. 7, 8.

all things into His hands."\* The absolute Lord of all created things employed the majesty and power which His Father had given into His hands to kneel at the feet of the twelve fishermen and to wash them. This is indeed the new world of a new Lord, and an action never before witnessed, and what wonder must it have excited in Heaven when the Angels saw their Lord taking upon Himself the office of a servant.

3. From this feeling of astonishment we may go on to consider—If this then be my King how is it that I do not esteem His greatness, that I do not love His example, that I do not imitate His virtues? We shall wonder at the eagerness with which worldly pride flies from these heavenly paths of humility, and prefers the confusion in which Lucifer is cast through the desire he had to be as God rather than the glory which Christ had through the humbling of Himself.

4. There is much on which to ponder when beholding Christ at the feet of Judas, seeing that our Lord knew the path which the obstinate and wicked man was treading, and that He nevertheless sought to win him back at the last with such touching demonstrations of love. And we may imagine how Christ wept with compassion whilst He was washing his feet, and how He spoke to his heart, lamenting over its hardness, and offering him pardon. Here we may excite the affection of fear of being deserted by God. Everything serves to blind the forsaken more and more.

5. We must reflect on the small and insignificant causes by which this desertion is so often occasioned,

\* St. John xiii. 1, 3.

viz., by neglecting yesterday and to-day to listen to interior callings; by allowing the appetites to gain the upper hand; and entering into temptation by not treating the flesh with severity, but indulging it, and by not thanking God for having pardoned so many sins, whence it comes to pass that the soul is justly forsaken by God. The thought of all this will move us to cry out, *Ne tradas nos in perpetuum, propter nomen tuum*—"Deliver us not up for ever, for Thy name's sake."\* *Delicta juventutis meæ et ignorantias meas ne memineris*—"The sins of my youth and my ignorances do not remember."†

6. We shall immediately begin to feel anxiety in regard to our state, and to ask whether we are in such a condition as to render us liable to be forsaken by God; and then the conscience will put the terrible question, Whether God will forsake us for ever? This awful idea is enough to tear a mountain from its foundation, and the hardest heart from its iniquity. Then, beginning to argue with itself, the soul will believe that it merits these chastisements, seeing it was once only, and no more, that our Lord washed the feet of Judas, and gave him the Bread of Life, whereby he hardened his heart and slew himself; for hearing from the mouth of Christ such reasons why he was a reprobate, the unhappy man could not but understand them all. What, then, can we say of our blind selves; for our Lord not only descends to wash our feet, but to place Himself within us, in order to confound us, seeing we neither esteem nor gratefully receive His loving treating of our wounds,

\* Daniel iii. 34.

† Psalm xxiv. 7.

but that, on the contrary, His loving kindnesses and His mercies distress us?

7. Let us reflect, my soul, on the end of all; let us think before the trial is closed, and since God loves us still, spite of so many injuries, so much infidelity, so much ingratitude, let us return and supplicate for pardon before He leaves us entirely and for ever.

8. At other times, beholding Him washing the feet of His disciples, I will cast my heart, covered with sores and wounds, into the basin, in order that He may wash it, saying, *Cor mundum crea in me Deus: et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus meis*—"Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels."\* At other times I will reprove myself, because my affections are so contrary to those of Christ, seeing that, although I ought to see, and to will, and to be able, I do not see or succeed in knowing, and that my affections do not help me in saving my soul, or giving strength to my heart, or afford me any aid, spite of the light bestowed upon my understanding by our Lord; but that they all tend to increase my iniquity, blindness, and weakness. I will, therefore, entreat of my Good Shepherd to bring me back into the right path, and I will resolve with all the strength of my soul to humiliate and abase myself. But how can a creature humiliate itself when it sees God humbling Himself at the feet of Judas? Here the blind eyes will open and see that abasements are flights of the soul towards God, Who is the Supreme Greatness, and that the

\* Psalm l. 12.

ascents of the worldly are descents into eternal confusion.

*Second Point.*

9. Christ came to St. Peter, who did not desire that his feet should be washed, but manifested the lively faith which he had in the greatness of Christ, and the sense which he had of his own low estate. All that he signified in the words, *Domine, tu mihi lavas pedes?* —“Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?”\* Here let us reflect upon the exceeding love with which Christ performs the like office for us now; humbling Himself and descending from Heaven to purify the soul from the earthly desires which associate themselves with every occupation to which it betakes itself. Beholding these things, we shall be filled with admiration at the exceeding love and desire which God has to cleanse us, and at the humility manifested by the King of Eternity, seeing that He desires to bestow such a remedy on us for our sins. Here, too, will be excited affections of praise and thankfulness, and a resolution to profit by the fear of incurring the divine indignation; then, full of reverence for His Majesty, and a desire for salvation and cleansing, we will entreat of Him to go and yet to stay—not to humiliate Himself so much seeing that He is God, and then to humiliate Himself still more for our sakes.

10. Christ enlightened the ignorant simplicity of Peter by saying to him, *Quod ego facio, tu nescis modo; scies autem postea*—“What I do thou knowest not now,

\* St. John xiii. 6.

but thou shalt know hereafter.”\* Here our Lord signifies to him that water was the symbol of the cleansing which His most pure Blood would effect in our souls; as He declared more clearly afterwards when St. Peter, in his obstinacy, said to Him, *Non lavabis mihi pedes in æternum*—“Thou shalt never wash my feet.” To which Christ replied, *Si non laverò te, non habebis partem mecum*—“If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with Me.”† With that St. Peter yielded. Here we must reflect that all our remedy is in Christ, and our affections must be directed to Him Who is the Fountain of our salvation; and then we shall ever be praying Him to have compassion on our blindness, on the passions which inflame us, and the miseries which attack us; and now we shall be arguing with Him, reminding Him how easy it is for Him to honour the poor, wondering within ourselves whether such bowels of compassion can check the current of His graces.

11. To the fervour of St. Peter, *Non tantum pedes meos, sed et manus et caput*—“Not only my feet, but also my hands and my head,”‡ Christ replied, *Qui lotus est, non indiget nisi ut pedes lavet*—“He that is washed needeth not but to wash his feet.”§ Here great light is given us whereby to understand how necessary it is before communicating not to be stained with any sin, however small it may be, in order that we may receive all the favours of this Divine Sacrament; moreover, we must especially weep over the sins that arise from malice and intention, for it

\* St. John xiii. 7.    † St. John xiii. 8.    ‡ St. John xiii. 9.

§ St. John xiii. 10.

would be great daring to venture to present ourselves before the eye of the King with an actual intention of insulting Him; and those who do so deserve that He should deprive them of all enjoyment in the heavenly food, and that they should fall by little and little into the abyss of hardness of heart. The couch of the heart is small, and so great a God does not suffer that any other affection should occupy it.

*Third Point.*

12. The washing of the feet being over, Christ said to them, "Know you what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. . . . For if I have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also."\*

13. Here must be joined together all the reasons on one side and on the other which may enable us to make the best resolution with regard to the road which is to be followed, for God remonstrates with us, saying, *Usquequo claudicatis in duas partes*—"How long do you halt between two sides?" If the world is God, follow it; but to serve two masters is to toil for no purpose and to do nothing, and to be hated of both. Let the soul see of what the tinsel and the gaudy splendours of the world consist, what are the laws it imposes, what offices it bestows, what rewards it gives, what truths it proclaims, so that we may not be blind in the presence of so much light. And if Christ be indeed King, let us determine to serve Him

\* St. John xiii. 12—15.

with uncovered face in spite of the Kings of the world. Let this mystery be concluded by an offering of service to the King, and to follow in His paths.

## TUESDAY.

## MEDITATION IX.—ON THE PRAYER IN THE GARDEN.

*First Point.*

1. Supper being concluded, Christ took leave of the Blessed Virgin, and went forth with eleven of His Disciples to Gethsemane. Immediately on entering the Garden, He left the eight Disciples, and withdrew into a place apart with the other three, and said to them, "My soul is sorrowful, even unto death. Sit you here while I pray." And the Evangelist says that He began to experience fear and heaviness. Here let us reflect upon all the causes of fear and heaviness experienced by our Lord; namely, that the Divinity deprived the inferior part of all light and consolation, in order that it might suffer alone, and bear all the sins of the world one by one. There, also, Christ beheld all the contempts with which we should treat His Blood and His inestimable love, and this greatly afflicted His Heart; there, too, He beheld all our sins and all our ingratitude.

2. Here we must be inspired with affections of compassion, since it is our sins which have rendered our God so sorrowful and so oppressed with heaviness, and we shall now understand why He says, *Servire me fecisti in peccatis tuis*—"Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins."\* Have I indeed a human

\* Isaias xlv. 24.



heart? Can I indeed bear to afflict One Who at such a price treats for my ransom? Have I allowed myself to indulge in sensual appetites, and in giving displeasure to God, when at the most I can only enjoy my sensual pleasures for a brief space, and in the end they will slay me, rather than give pleasure to God in which my life consists? No, my Lord, be not angry. Thy Majesty will not permit such an evil.

3. Here the soul must lay the foundation stone of its house, which is a resolution not to displease God, spite of all the pleasures and honours and interests of the world; and it must say to them all that it does not recognize them or know what they are; that God is all things to it, and that in order to give pleasure to Him it would descend into hell.

4. Here, moreover, the soul learns to know the strength of those domestic enemies—its appetites; which, by means of violence, deceit, and by making it forget the treasure it is losing, take from it the remembrance of God and the desire to give Him pleasure, keeping it occupied with all kinds of vile and painted things which bear no fruit, and have no connection with the end for which it was created.

#### *Second Point.*

Christ, having withdrawn from His Disciples, prostrated Himself on His face and prayed to His Father, saying—"Father, all things are possible to Thee; remove this chalice from Me." Here Christ teaches us the wisdom of prayer; He teaches that, in all troubles and afflictions, and more especially in those of the soul, and in the temptations which attack us most

strongly, we must have recourse to God, in Whom is all our remedy and our light. *Ipsē avulsus est ab eis quantum jactus est lapidis*—"He withdrew from His Disciples about a stone's throw."\* Not understanding all the love that God feels towards us, or the desire He has to aid us, our sinful nature refuses to go to Him, whilst the loyal and courageous soul, without looking at losses or gains, forces it to say, *Fiat voluntas mea*—"Thy will be done."

6. On this point we must reflect that we ought to be always resolved to have recourse to prayer in the heat of temptation, in the folds of the snare. On the other hand, the devil feels the utmost solicitude that the passions should be yielded to at once, that the soul should not consult God, that it should not reflect on what it is going to do; for if, full of courage, it holds counsel with God, if it goes up to Him in sighs and groans, it escapes at once from the snare and the net, and flies upwards to Heaven on the wings of liberty and gladness.

7. We must reflect in what God finds pleasure in prayer, namely, in dryness, affliction, and heaviness, and that in these the soul should resign itself to His will. It ought, moreover, to esteem prayer all the more, since our Lord experienced all this, and it ought to render Him a thousand thanks mingled with admiration that He should have done so much for a creature so weak.

### *Third Point.*

8. Being in an agony He fell upon the ground, and prayed, *prolixius orabat*, until His sweat became as

\* St. Luke xxii. 41.

drops of blood trickling to the ground. Here we must excite our soul to inquire lovingly of Him—“My King, what affliction is this? Whence flows this blood? Alas! my sins are the executioners. Give me, O Lord, a drop of this balsam to cure my wounds. If but one drop might fall upon this heart of stone! What can I do to console Thy Divine Majesty?” And then pass in review what we can do in His service, and resolve to do it.

9. We must reflect how the three Disciples slept, and the reprimand addressed to them by Christ: *Sic non potuistis una hora vigilare mecum? Vigilate, et orate ut non intretis in tentationem*—“What! could you not watch one hour with Me? Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,”\* which was what happened to them afterwards. Here the soul must endeavour to determine to live always in prayer, for if the devils rob it of this exercise, it is deprived of light and weapons, and it remains miserable, given up to the desires of the flesh and of vanity. Then let us reflect upon the conclusion of the prayer—“And there appeared to Him an Angel from Heaven, strengthening Him.”† With what courage did He not rise to suffer! And it is this which we have to ask our Lord, which is solid devotion.

\* St. Matt. xxvi. 40, 41.

† St. Luke xxii. 43.

## WEDNESDAY.

## MEDITATION X.—OF THE APPREHENSION.

*First Point.*

1. Christ rose to receive His enemies, asking of them whom they sought. They replied to Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." He answered, "I am He," and they all fell to the ground. Then He took away their fear and permitted Himself to be apprehended, saying—"This is your hour and the power of darkness." From that time He gave Himself up as a lamb into the hands of the wolves, and permitted them to lose all respect for Him, to bind Him, to tread upon Him, and beat Him.

2. Here we shall find much matter for reflection on all that was done to Christ in His Passion. He suffered of His own freewill. *Oblatus est quia ipse voluit*—"He was offered because it was His own will."\* For love of us He took from Samson the hairs of his strength, and in order to show it more clearly, by a single word He caused all His enemies to fall to the ground. Here we shall begin to judge what we owe to His love, and we shall be ashamed at the poor return we make. We shall attentively consider the immense inequality there is between His Heart and ours; that, being God, and having no need of us, yet, in order to give us His Kingdom, He loved us enough to give His Blood and His life for us, whilst we, He being our eternal life and our glory, do nothing, and have no desire to share in the

\* Isaias liii. 7.

outrages inflicted upon Him or in His sorrows. Shall such love as this meet with so much coldness? Shall so many benefits be received with such ingratitude? *Non possumus aperire os : confusio et opprobrium facti sumus servis tuis et his qui colunt te*—"We cannot open our mouth : we are become a shame and reproach to Thy servants and to them that worship Thee.\* Now is the time to abase ourselves before God, and before those who love Him, and not to delay until the time when the confusion shall be eternal and without remedy.

3. The most profitable portion of this meditation will consist in letting one's thoughts rest on the contemplation of Christ trampled upon and kicked and buffeted by the vilest hands and by the greatest wretches upon earth, asking ourselves—"Who is this? How can Heaven consent to it? Who brought Him into such a pass? How is it that He bears such injuries with so much patience and love? Here we may envy that humble and gentle Heart in Whose anguish ours has so little part. Here we may learn that which He commands, *Discite a me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde : et invenietis requiem animabus vestris*—"Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of Heart : and you shall find rest to your souls."† Here it will be suitable to make a short reflection upon the pride which does such infinite harm to the soul, rendering all its actions evil and never leaving it a moment at peace.

\* Daniel iii. 33.      † St. Matt. xi. 29.

*Second Point.*

4. He was taken to the houses of Annas and Caiaphas, and there he was buffeted by a wretched servant of the Pontiff. Hereby affronts are rendered most honourable, since they were inflicted upon the face of God, although the world, which abhors Christ, and will not have Him to rule over it, but only its own Cæsars, has never admitted them to a place among its honours. He was deemed by the Pontiff to be worthy of death, because He confessed Himself to be the Son of God, and they all spat upon Him, and gave Him many blows, and left Him bound all night in a corner of the court with the officers of the guard. Wherefore St. Bridget says, that until the Day of Judgment the outrages inflicted upon our Saviour will not be known. The Evangelists enumerate five different kinds, namely, blows, spitting, mockings, blindfolding and buffeting Him, when they said, *Prophetiza nobis Christe, quis est qui te percussit?*—"Prophecy unto us, O Christ; who is he that struck Thee?"\*

5. On this night, by means of his ministers, Satan did all he could think of, and had power to do, in order to see whether that New Man would indulge in the smallest outburst of passion, of anger, of impatience, of vexation, any word of disgust, of irritation, of sorrow, or any other weakness wherein he might discover any trace of sin; and the King of Glory gave Himself that night a satiety of insults proportionate to the hunger He felt for them, and with

\* St. Matt. xxvi. 68.

what had been written of Him, *Dabit percutienti se maxillam, saturabitur opprobriis*—"He shall be filled with reproaches."\* All these must be adored in these word, *Ave rex gloria, tu solus nostros es miseratus errores. Patri obediens ductus est ad crucifigendum.* And dwelling upon His love, we shall exclaim, *Vere languores nostros ipse tulit, et dolores nostros ipse portavit*—"Surely He hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows."†

*Third Point.*

6. The fall of St. Peter, who with oaths and maledictions denied that he was a Disciple of Christ, must be considered, and how he denied Him through fear of a servant, who put the question to him, and how Jesus looked upon him, and invited him to weep, *Et egressus foras, flevit amare*—"And going forth, he wept bitterly."‡

7. All our prayer should be to know our own infinite weaknesses, since whatever confidence we have in ourselves is but manifest blindness, for there is nothing in us in which we can trust. Here we must greatly value that look which God cast upon Peter, and by the force of our prayers we must constrain Him to look upon us also, saying, *Vide Domine, et considera, quoniam facta sum vilis*—"See, Lord, and consider, for I am become vile."§ And again—"Cast me not away from Thy face."

\* Lament. iii. 30.

† Isaias liii. 4.

‡ St. Matt. xxvi. 75.

§ Lament. xl. 4.

## THURSDAY.

## MEDITATION XI.—THE PRESENTATION BEFORE PILATE.

*First Point.*

1. The Pontiffs brought our Saviour before the Governor. They sought for reasons whereby to condemn Him, accusing Him falsely, and saying that He refused to give tribute to Cæsar, and that He stirred up the people. Judas, seeing that the Pontiffs had delivered Jesus to the secular arm, repented of what he had done, and took the thirty pieces of silver to the Temple, saying—"I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." They replied that it was nothing to them; therefore he went, and seeking a halter, hanged himself.

2. In the accusation brought against our Saviour by false witnesses in presence of the Governor, the great lesson the soul has to meditate upon is the sentence, and the calmness with which our Saviour bore it all. The reason which His Majesty had for doing so, and which renders Him superior to us in our blindness, which also was the fountain of His wonderful self-possession, was that which He gave to St. Peter, *Calicem quem dedit mihi Pater, non bibam illum?*—"The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"\* From this same fountain those souls drink who like doves of Jesus, *resident juxta fluentia plenissima*—live in the meditation of the waters of His Passion, of His example, and of His

\* St. John xviii. 11.



Blood. These things His servants do, imitating Him in patience and in joy, even as it was with the Apostles, *Ibant gaudentes a conspectu concilii: quoniam digni habiti sunt pro nomine Jesu contumeliam pati*—"They went from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus."\* Meditate this word *worthy*: they considered it an *honour* to be raised by the King to the affliction of His throne—that is to say, of the Cross.

3. The contrary of all this is taught in the school of the world, which in words and deeds abhors all such doctrine as that which Christ brought down from Heaven; and it is enough to make us weep when we behold these miserable slaves, bound by laws and a system so different from that of Jesus Christ, and to see also that it is requisite they should be as Samson in order to break through the cords of the Philistines. *Qui est hic, et laudabimus eum? fecit enim mirabilia in vita sua*—"Who is he, and we will praise him? for he hath done wonderful things in his life."† But since God has offered to bear the cost of all, and to give us strength, we have only to follow Him, not like Nicodemus, by night, but with uncovered face, prizing and honouring the dishonour shown to Christ, as being His loyal and honoured servants.

4. There is a very special point for consideration in the penitence of Judas, which is, that the devil also gives repentance to those who are his, but of such a kind that it leads them to despair. Now it often

\* Acts v. 31.

\* Eccclus. xxxi. 9.

happens that he deceives us thus in small matters ; and when the sins are greater, the greater also is the deception we fall into ; when we feel a great affection or passion for any carnal pleasure, and when the violence of the passion has more power over us than the remedy ; when, too, the determination to sin arises we know not whence, then we fall into a sorrow and despair similar to that of Judas, and all our confidence is weakened, and we imagine that we can never come out triumphant, that we have done all we can do, and that we have neither strength nor grace to persevere. And so we go on, giving ear to the serpent, and forgetting the goodness of God. Then it is that we ought to examine into the depths of our own weakness, and, on the other hand, into the exceeding goodness of God, taking example from the blindness of Judas, who did not desire to ask pardon of Christ, nor address his supplications to our Lady.

*Second Point.*

5. The Governor sent Christ our Lord to King Herod, because he had heard that He had preached in Galilee. As soon as He was brought into the presence of the wicked and haughty King, Herod required of Him miracles, but Christ answered Him nothing, for God will not permit His voice to be heard in such palaces. Seeing this, Herod treated Him as a fool, and his servants clothed Him in white, and mocked Him.

6. Let us ponder deeply upon the madness of this world, which calls itself Christian, let us see what it believes and how it acts, how it adores and how it

despises Christ, how, being devoid, as it is, of understanding, it attaches itself to glory which is brief and vain, nor is it aroused by the sight of the grave, or by seeing so many of all ranks die ; and wherever it sees any who imitate Christ, it mocks at and despises them, looking upon them as men who have no knowledge. Alas, for the bad examples given in the world ! The only remedy there is for the little ones of Christ, and which alone can enable them to pass through this furnace of Babylon without being burnt, is to know that the smoke is raised by Satan, that his are the flames, and the suffocation they cause, and to weep and sigh for the dew of Heaven to be shed upon them, that they may live, as by a miracle, in the midst of the flames.

7. Herein the world receives a great affront, for the profane palaces of its Kings are turned into the houses of madness, where God is despised, and pride worshipped ; but when the fools of the world imagine that they are making a fool of Christ, His Majesty makes it manifest to them by what He does, that it is they who are insane, since they have called the Eternal Wisdom mad. Notwithstanding, the obstinate world remains still of the same opinion, and condemns the doctrine of Christ as madness.

### *Third Point.*

8. Pilate, in his desire to set Christ at liberty, proposed to the Priests and the people to release to them a prisoner, as was his wont during the Pasch, and desired that they should choose one of the twain, either Christ or Barabbas. The people and Priests,

being persuaded by Satan, chose Barabbas, and desired that Christ should be crucified; and the judge consented to their will.

9. This is human esteem, so greatly worshipped by our hearts, and we have therefore to consider in what this esteem consists. What substance has it? Who puts it into our hearts? How is it that it has made itself master of our affections? What is there in it that is good or glorious? By what right, or for what reason, do we dedicate to it our labours and our life, toiling hard after it in order that we may attain to it? Can it possibly be God? Can it give us eternal life? What claim has it upon us, that we should be its slaves, that we should serve it with our possession, with our whole strength, yield up to it our souls and our salvation? Is it not madness and blindness for any one who is free, and who is the child of such noble parents, bought at such a cost, with such precious Blood, and so bitter a death, thus to act? The soul must ponder over these things, in order that it may root up all the blind, irrational affections, which have kept it for so many years in an atmosphere of lies and vanity, whence it will fall, like Icarus, into the abyss.

#### FRIDAY.

MEDITATION XII.—ON THE PILLAR, THE CROWN OF THORNS, AND THE ECCE HOMO.

##### *First Point.*

1. The Governor, seeing how these wolves were ravening to feast on that spotless Lamb, and how

desirous they were to drink His Blood, in order that he might satisfy them in some measure, and appease their hatred, determined to command our Saviour to be scourged. His servants took Him, therefore, into the court, where there was standing part of a column with a ring, and having unclothed Him they bound Him by means of the ring to the column, and being instigated by the devil they gave Him five thousand lashes, not leaving upon His most sacred Body one whole spot, and shedding a pool of blood about His feet. When they unbound Him, it is said that He fell down powerless upon the ground and was bathed in His Blood, and was made a mock at by the executioners; and in order to outrage Him still more they hid His garments, and He went about searching for them amidst their contempts and insults.

2. First, let the soul ponder upon the thirst of Jesus to give His Blood for it, desiring moreover to submit to such vile chastisements for love of us, that He had an immeasurable desire to be scourged without pity. Until this thirst for suffering and insult be enkindled in the soul it can have no firm hold of anything. Let it, then, enter within the sweetest breast of Jesus, and behold His Heart, and see with what anxiety He sheds His Blood for love of us, and let us envy His humility, and beg of Him that He would change our stony heart.

3. Let us meditate upon that fall and upon His being bathed in His Blood, for it appears that He fell from weakness, and that it was not because He had no knowledge of that treasure consecrated by His Divinity. Here let the soul bathe its heart and

anoint its eyes with this heavenly ointment, and let it say lovingly to its Lord—How is it that Thou wert so prodigal of Thy Blood to these wolves, and that Thou didst give them to drink of it in rivers, whilst to me, Lord, Thou deniest a drop wherewith to soften this flinty heart?

4. Let us meditate upon Christ all covered with blood and marked with lashes, seeking His garments, and how there was no kind of suffering or outrage which He did not accept, and let the soul contemplate Him as did Isaias when he said, *Sicut ovis ad occisionem ducetur, et quasi agnus coram tondente se obmutescet et non aperiet os suum*—"He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearers, and He shall not open His mouth." \* And let us meditate on those words in the Gospel, *Discite a me, quia mitis sum, et humilis corde*—"Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart." † What peace He kept, never being moved to anger or to sorrow. He Who is the King of Glory and Master of all the wisdom of Heaven.

#### *Second Point.*

5. The soldiers in order to inflict still greater outrage and suffering upon Him, said—This is He Who desired to make Himself King, let us make Him ours. Then some of them took thorns and plaited them and crowned Him therewith, more than seventy thorns entering within His sacred Head; and they gave Him a reed for a sceptre, and a ragged and discoloured purple robe, and bent their knee saying,

\* Isaias liii. 7.

† St. Matt. xi. 29.

*Ave rex Judæorum*, and they struck Him with the reed.

6. Let the soul contemplate how the Spouse of souls prepares Himself for the bed of the Cross and the delights of His bride. And here it may ponder upon each word of that passage in the Canticle, *Egredimini et videte filiæ Sion regem Salomonem in diademate, quo coronavit illum mater sua in die desponsationis illius, et in die lætitiæ cordis ejus*—“Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see King Solomon in the diadem wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the joy of his heart.”\*

7. Let us also reflect that in giving us His thorns and outrages He is giving us thereby so many proofs of His love. Let the ungrateful and wretched soul ponder upon this until it has attained to the belief that it is loved by its God, and that to bestow upon it His thorns is not to manifest anger towards it, but love. Let it reflect that God was full of love towards it when He permitted Himself to be crowned with thorns, which He suffered for love of us. Here let us recognize His Majesty in the midst of so much darkness, and let us exclaim, *Tu rex gloriæ Christe, tu Patris sempiternus es Filius*—“Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ; Thou art the Everlasting Son of the Father.”

#### *Third Point.*

8. When Pilate saw Him, he was dismayed to behold Christ our Lord so disfigured, and believing that the sight of Him would awaken compassion even

\* Cant. iii. 11.

in His enemies, he went forth with Him and showed Him to the people, saying, *Ecce homo*—"Behold the Man." And they cried out, *Tolle, tolle, crucifige eam*—"Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him." Pilate answered, *Regem vestrum crucifigam*—"Shall I crucify your King?" They answered, *Non habemus regem nisi Cæsarem*—"We have no King but Cæsar." Let us reflect upon the means our Saviour took in order to subdue our hearts, and how men are only hardened all the more thereby, for the compassion which we should give even to a beast was not to be found in these perfidious Jews, who—*Odio habuerunt me gratis*—"hated Him without a cause."\*

9. Let us reflect that in a certain way our iniquity is even greater, since having already believed that He is God, and that for our sake He suffered, yet in our works we deny and abhor Him.

10. Let us reflect on the words, *Non habemus regem nisi Cæsarem*—"We have no King but Cæsar." When we esteem and obey the world and its laws more than Christ's, we do not desire Him to be our King excepting in words, not in truth, since we make no account of His laws or His examples.

11. On these three points we must reflect from time to time, with compassion upon the sufferings of Christ, remembering that we are guilty and that He is innocent and holy; at other times we must be inspired with grief at having sinned and having been the cause of His torments and outrages; at other times with astonishment at the royal virtues, strength, valour, and exploits

\* St. John xv. 25.



of the God-Man. We must likewise have recourse to tender affections, anointing with them our wounded senses, since He has given us the balsam of His Blood for them; and we must also make inquiries wherefore He gave so much at such a cost and with so much love to us, ungrateful as we are.

### SATURDAY.

MEDITATION XIII.—OF THE CROSS ON THE SHOULDERS OF OUR LORD.

#### *First Point.*

1. The Governor knew the innocence of Christ, but on hearing from the Priests that if he released Him he was no friend of Cæsar, he was afraid, and allowed himself to yield, and to consent to their evil rule. Then the wicked judge condemned the innocent Man to the death of the Cross, asked for water, and washing his hands, said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Man." The people answered, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children."

2. First, let us consider the iniquity committed by the idolatrous judge in condemning a Man who was innocent that he might not lose the friendship of Cæsar, and with how much more reason our Saviour may complain of judges who call themselves Christians, and who do not dedicate themselves to the service of Christ, but to that of their King. It is very important, no matter how difficult it may be, that we should tear out by the roots that vehement desire to please rulers, which wages hidden war upon Christian judges, by telling them that they desire to

please their rulers only when it is in conformity with the commandments of God ; and then, when a call arises, blinding them and making them search for reasons whereby they may satisfy the pleasure and the interest of the King, although conscience tells them that it is against God. Notwithstanding, they seek for plausible reasons by which they may silence it ; but in the judgment of God, with whom no fictions avail, they are condemned. When the intention is pure, and seeks God first, and that which is most pleasing to Him, then it will not yield to the King or the highest if they command anything contrary to God's will.

3. Let us reflect how Pilate sought to excuse his iniquity ; and, in like manner, Christian judges when they say shamelessly, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children," even as the people exclaimed, taking on themselves the blood of Christ to their own condemning and that of their children. Here we may consider how those who know God best, and hold most intimate communion with Him, fall the lowest, by offending Him with as much satisfaction to themselves as though they were performing good deeds. Let it not be, however, O my soul ! that the light and the callings which God gives thee should only be for thy severer judgment, thy greater condemnation, and should plunge thee in greater blindness ; but let us have recourse to His mercy that He may not give the crown to another. It is not this thorn and this holy fear that we have to root out of the heart, but the vain security which exposes us to perils, and casts us out of the heaven

of a good conscience into irremediable darkness, like Lucifer.

4. Let us reflect with what serenity and equanimity He received the sentence ; and such a sentence ! and from such a judge ! It is well often to turn our eyes to this sovereign light—for all the just learn from this sun—and we shall do so likewise by never looking upon vain and ignorant and changeable creatures, but upon Heaven, whence all that comes is ordered by future and divine reasons ; but when we look below, the heart is oppressed at seeing such iniquity as reigns upon the earth. The Son of God saw that it was the sentence pronounced by God, because He had taken upon Himself our sins, and therefore He received it with content ; and so also the just will receive the injuries inflicted upon them by men. Here the soul will give itself to the Lord anew, and beg of Him grace and pardon, reasoning tenderly with Him, that such a great work and such a great prize may not be lost for me, and offering Him to the Father, that I may be one of the chosen.

*Second Point.*

5. The sentence being pronounced that He should suffer still greater torment and outrage, the holy Lamb, in His great love, ordered that the Cross should be placed upon His shoulders, and bearing it He went forth to Calvary. Here the soul ought to make a most devout representation to itself of that passage ; it should behold its King bowed down, and bleeding with the crown of His Kingdom, the crown of thorns, and the imperial sceptre,

the Cross, upon His shoulders. It should behold how He embraces it with both His arms, and be filled of envy at the greatness of heart with which the new Isaac bears the wood upon which He is about to be sacrificed, and should imagine to itself that He beholds it and calls to it, saying, "My son, come thee behind Me, and help Me to bear this Cross, even if it be but one little shaving; and do not imagine thou canst follow Me if thou art feasted and honoured, for it would not be seemly that a dainty servant should come into the presence of his Master in such affliction."

6. Herein consists a very material point, and it is to recognize in what cares and troubles we are bearing the Cross of our Lord; and it is for want of seeing this truth that many spiritual persons disown it, abhor it, and imagine that it hinders them from going to God, being blinded in their understanding, or to speak more truly, by their self-love, which does not desire such a path. When, however, troubles come from the hand of God, even although it be some pressing temptation of vanity, anger, immorality, &c., still it is a cross. And His Majesty gives it in order that it may be turned into a crown, and not be as an obstacle or the cause of a fall, even as Wisdom says, *Certamen forte dedit illi ut vinceret, et sciret quoniam omnium potentior est sapientia*—"She gave him a strong conflict that he might overcome, and know that wisdom is mightier than all." \*

7. Let us reflect that God desires we should bear our cross and should combat with it, and to abhor

\* Wisdom x. 12.

it is to abhor the means of eternal life, and then to begin the battle with foreknowledge and strength, consulting with God how the soul may beat down the infernal wall of the appetite of presumption, of appearing well before men, of being esteemed, and the appetite of sensual pleasures which is so wont to conquer our weakness. Being thus resolved to make war upon them, let us attack with all our might the powers of vanity, having now lost all fear of them, and the filthy cajoling and traitorous flesh, and let us begin from the present moment to live like reasonable men.

*Third Point.*

8. There are three circumstances in this passage of the Bearing of the Cross which ought to excite great devotion in us. First, the meeting with the Blessed Virgin, when some of those present were touched by the grief of the Mother and the Son, others by the grief which the Mother felt because she could not suffer those outrages and pains in order to give pleasure to God, whilst the insults which she saw inflicted upon the Divine Majesty pierced her heart. How the Mother and Son beheld each other, each feeling the sufferings of the other more than their own. The sons and servants of Mary may profit much by this example; they may feel assured of their salvation through her intercession, and learn from her resignation, peace, &c.

9. Another circumstance to be noted, was when He saw the faithful women weeping and said to them, *Filiæ Jerusalem, nolite flere super me; si in viridi ligno hæc faciunt, in arido quid fiet?*—"Daughters of

Jerusalem, weep not for Me; if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?"\* And to meditate much on the latter portion of these words. Lastly, when He fell with the Cross, and that most valiant Soul exhausted all Its strength until at last It could bear no more. Let the soul come and offer to bear the Cross which His Majesty gives it, because in the company of Jesus all burdens become light.

## SUNDAY.

## MEDITATION XIV.—ON THE MYSTERIES OF MOUNT CALVARY.

*First Point.*

1. Christ having arrived at Mount Calvary, He was divested of His garments, laid upon His hard bed, and nailed upon it by His feet and hands. Upon the raising of that royal standard with the living image of God the Father upon it, the earth trembled, the veil was rent in twain, the sun hid its face, the air was darkened, the rocks were rent asunder.

2. The best way in which to enjoy this great feast that God places before His friends, and which is the same as that of which it is written, *Et faciet Dominus exercituum omnibus populis in monte hoc convivium pinguium*—"And the Lord of Hosts will make unto all people in the mountain a feast,"† is to go to that holy mountain, to contemplate everything in detail, and to invite our senses to enjoy this feast of God. Then the soul, filled with astonishment on seeing its

\* St. Luke xxiii. 28, 31.

† Isaias xxv. 6.

Lord burning in the fire of affliction, without His love or His patience being consumed, will say, *Vadam, et videbo visionem hanc magnam, quare non comburatur rubus*—"I will go and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt."\* Let it gaze upon that oratory of Mary, for she alone penetrated into the lofty mysteries which her Son was preparing beneath those dark clouds for our redemption. Let it see how the mountain was veiled in obscurity, in order to increase devotion and attention to the mystery which was being enacted, and how all creatures were overwhelmed with grief at seeing their Lord naked, outraged, lacerated, and nailed upon a Cross. Let it picture that Sun hidden in the cloud of His afflictions, and from thence sending forth rays with added power, whereby to enkindle all hearts, for there it was that more than anywhere else our Lord made manifestation of His goodwill towards us. Let us wonder and admire this so strange mode of reigning on a Cross. What a crown, what a throne, what signet rings, what embroidery, what purple, what food, and what precious wine!

3. The most entrancing kind of exercise, and that which least wearies, is to begin by inquiring—Who is this Man that is nailed to this Cross? What new kind of crown is it which is placed on His head? What is there inscribed on that tablet? This is the King. Is it here He takes possession of His Kingdom? Here that, naked and lacerated, He distributes His kingdoms? Can it be that this Man thirsts so eagerly to shed His blood, that even after death

\* Exodus iii. 3.

He gives it out of His heart, where alone there remains any, and that to His enemies to drink, permitting His side to be opened? How many gates, O holy God, have been opened for souls to nestle in like doves, there to be sheltered, and to taste of Heaven even in this life. In however small a degree the soul may be able to contemplate these things, it cannot but be kindled into ardour, even though it were of stone, in presence of so wonderful a spectacle.

4. This is the splendid feast set before man of all the virtues, for we shall find them all crowned in Christ Crucified and in His throne, if we know how to recognize them. That which the eyes of the Blessed Virgin perceived was not so much the grief as the victories of Christ, for although she beheld Him dying, she also saw in Him the strong Lion of Juda, annihilating His three foremost enemies—death, the devil, and sin.

### *Second Point.*

5. The Master of Heaven, seeing Himself on the chair of the Cross, taught us in seven words His celestial wisdom. The first was—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The most powerful act of love is to embrace our enemies. And now He excused them to His Father, and was shedding His blood and His life for them!

6. Secondly, to the good thief who begged of Him to remember him when He came into His Kingdom, He said—"To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise," He being more than grateful for a recognition so due to His innocence, and given to Him by a thief.



What, then, may not my soul hope, which has adored and confessed Him so often?

7. Thirdly, to His Mother and the Beloved Disciple He said, "Woman behold thy son," and to St. John, "Behold thy Mother." By this we have a right to argue with our Lady, to whom our Lord commanded that in St. John she should receive us all as her children, begging her to remember, at what a time, with what anxiety, and with what desire that she should shield us, He recommended us to her. Now is the time to recognize this Mother as ours, to kiss her hand, and take possession of this celestial Paradise, as St. John did, who from that hour received her as all his treasure.

8. The fourth, when He complained to His Father, exclaiming—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" After the same manner we also may complain, that not only does His Majesty leave us in the midst of our troubles, but of our sins also. "How is it, Lord, that Thou hast left me in the hands of my appetites, and hast not placed before Thine eyes the Blood of Thy Son? I know that once I did not esteem it, nor avail myself of this sacrifice, but now, O Lord, that I see what I lost, I entreat of Thee to weigh my sins in the balance of the Cross, and let them be annihilated in the Blood of Thy Son."

9. The fifth word that He uttered, when He was faint from loss of blood, was—"I thirst." He thirsted for two reasons; first, from loss of blood, and they would not give Him a single drop of water, but only vinegar; and secondly, because He thirsted for my love, and begged of me, like the Samaritan woman,

to give Him to drink, and I gave Him only the vinegar of my sins, albeit I know that He is my God. I do not believe that the devils would be so cruel, if their God asked them so lovingly for somewhat to drink. No more, O my Lord, will I give Thee to taste a bitter draught, I desire to offer my whole self as a holocaust to thee, and to do battle with my senses, removing every worldly superfluity. But, O Lord, strengthen my weakness, that I may annihilate that self-love which has such great power over me, making me break my resolutions on every occasion.

10. The sixth word was—"It is consummated." There is not left anything undone in sufferings, or actions, or season, or words, in order that what was ordained from eternity by the Father should be accomplished. This is the obedience, the valour of love, the glory of One Who is enamoured, the crown of a Conqueror.

11. The seventh word was—"Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend My Spirit;" and saying this, He gave up the ghost.

### *Third Point.*

12. This point will be that of the descent from the Cross, of the solitude to which our Lady betook herself, she who was the rightful heiress of those rich spoils which remained of her deceased Son and of the Cross; of the manner in which she performed the burial, and took leave of her Son, and departed with St. John, full of grief and of hope in His Resurrection.

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13. The whole of this meditation must consist in lively and tender affections. We must take as ours those precious relics of the thorns and the nails, pondering much upon all that God has undergone for our love. As the Apostle says, that the same Lord Jesus humiliated Himself unto death, and that the death of the Cross. And we must conclude by being convinced that there is no other way to Heaven but that of the Cross. And that if we desire to find Christ, it must be in the Cross and in thorns, offering to suffer all in order that we may find God, for all is as nought in comparison with finding a treasure so great.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE UNITIVE WAY.

## FOURTH WEEK.

## MONDAY.

## MEDITATION I.—ON THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST OUR LORD.

*First Point.*

WHEN Christ expired upon the Cross, His triumphs and glories began, because that God-like soul, as being conqueror of death and hell, descended thither to despoil the devil, and to take from him the captives which he was keeping in Limbo—that is to say, the holy Fathers, and as many others as had died in the grace of God, and who were detained there without being able to go to Heaven, because it still remained shut against all the sons of Adam. He entered as Master, to the terror of the devils, filling the dark abyss with light, and immediately all the souls who were in it received the light of glory, and beheld the divine essence which Christ bore thither united with Him.

2. In this exercise the soul begins to behold another region, and like the cumat when its wings come, it leaves the deserts and the paths where it crept along, and begins to fly, on the wings of loving affections, until it rises to the sphere of the fire of the

Divinity, which transforms all who ascend into it into itself; and thus it is with the souls who fly up to it through love, uniting and transforming them into itself in such a manner that it seems as if God lived more in them than they in themselves, as St. Paul says; and this is the fruit of the whole unitive way.

3. In this first point, let us reflect upon the infinite joy experienced by the Soul of Christ on seeing the fulness of our redemption concluded, that business for which His Father had sent Him upon earth; and on beholding also the devil conquered, who was such a tyrant over the world; and seeing His Eternal Father satisfied through His death for the injuries done to Him by us. Filled thus with a thousand joys, He went to redeem the captives who were awaiting Him in one of the four divisions of hell.

4. Let us ponder much upon the humility of this great King, Who, not content with having abased Himself so much as to take upon Him our flesh, did not hesitate, now that He was in His glory, to descend with it into hell. And let us consider His love to His flock, for in that, although He might by one word of command have drawn them forth from out those dark places, He desired to show them plainly how much He prized them, by descending to them, and desiring to be there with them, filling them with glory, until the hour of His Resurrection should arrive.

5. Let the soul desire to enter as often as it can into a contemplation of the love which Jesus bears to each individual soul, how strong, how pure, how tender, how persevering, how anxious, that it should

destroy and disarm its insane self-love, and force itself to love, seeing that it gains so much thereby, and that it is more conformable to our nature to repay love with love.

6. There is in this point matter of recreation for the soul, whilst contemplating the joy, the praises, the thankfulness of these happy captives, and recognizing well-known Saints, such as St. John Baptist, the good thief, the aged Simeon, St. Joseph, David, Abraham, and the Fathers, now that they have passed into the possession of their new Master, considering the particular reason why they should be filled with joy.

*Second Point.*

7. At the dawn of day, a little before sunrise, Christ came to the sepulchre, accompanied by His captives, and His glorious Soul re-entered into that wounded and disfigured Body, transforming it like the sun when it shines below a cloud, and steeps it in crimson hues, making it as dazzling as itself. He then endowed it with the four gifts—transparency, agility, subtlety, and impassibility, and penetrated through the stone of the sepulchre without being perceived by the guards, till the Angel came, with his countenance like lightning, and in sight of the soldiers rolled away the stone, and left them terror-stricken, like men that were dead.

8. In this point we must give our whole thoughts to the consideration of the end which trials have; fifteen hours of Passion, outrages, and torments, have a fruit of eternal glory. Wherefore St. Paul says, *Momentaneum et leve tribulationis nostræ, supra modum*

*in sublimitate æternum gloriæ pondus operatur in nobis*—“Our light tribulation, which is at present momentary, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.”\* Then we must add together all the glories and greatness of the world, with its freedom and its pleasure, and see what fruits they bear, with what haste they pass, how they torment its Alexanders and its Cæsars, and let us firmly open, once and for ever, our eyes to the truth, that it is a miserable thing to go on living upon lies, and still more miserable when we are aware of it, yet persist in doing so.

9. Hope has much whereon to feed when seeing our Head rise with so great glory, from which the Apostle inferred, *Nunc Christus resurrexit, omnes resurgemus*—“Now Christ is risen, we shall all rise.”† Moreover, the glory with which His body was invested is a pattern for the gala riches in which His servants will be clothed on the day of their resurrection. This hope it is which makes the just fling away the playthings of the world, and choose tears, fasting and severities, even as those who remember how different are the ends which await a life of trouble and a life of pleasure.

### *Third Point.*

10. From the sepulchre our Lord went immediately, and with the same attendants, to visit His Mother, who was in a state of distraction through the extremity of her grief, as our Lord told St. Bridget. But the Sun entered, and the moon was eclipsed; she

\* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

† 1 Cor. xv.

was filled with joy and delight, and the Son of God gave her to see all that she had so much desired, and embracing her in His arms, filled her soul with an ineffable sweetness, in which He left her plunged.

11. In order to understand the joy of our Lady through the greatness of her sorrow, we must imagine that her soul was like to the sea, and that in like manner her joy was in accordance with the immeasurable greatness of her capacity and of her love. If the desire which on attaining its end rejoices in the same degree as it desired, what desires must those have been which a creature so capacious of them, so filled with virtues and conformity with the will of God, must have had in that extremity? Here the children of Mary, without proceeding any further, may rest and delight themselves in the glory of their Mother. It is also to be remembered that whoever loves rightly does not look at himself at all, but at him whom he loves, and thus all the glory of her Son was her own, and the Virgin had even more delight in seeing His glory than if it had been her own.

12. Another kind of meditation is very delightful in regard to this point; that is, to imagine what really took place, that all the holy Fathers came to give their congratulations to the Blessed Virgin, and that first of all came our first parents, whose sin she had been the means of repairing; all would speak to her in the same words which they had addressed to her in figure when after Judith had cut off the head of Holofernes, they cried out to her, *Tu gloria Ferusalem, tu lætitia Israel, tu honorificentia populi nostri. Benedixit te Dominus in virtute sua quia per te ad nihilum*



*redegit inimicos nostros*—"Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honour of our people. The Lord hath blessed thee by His power, because by thee He hath brought our enemies to nought."\*

## TUESDAY.

### MEDITATION II.—OF THE APPEARANCE OF CHRIST TO HIS DISCIPLES.

#### *First Point.*

1. The same day that Christ our Lord rose, after it had grown dark, the Disciples having first been prepared by the news given them of His Resurrection by Mary Magdalene, the two Marys, St. Peter, St. James the Less, and the two Disciples from Emmaus, by which tidings their faith had been greatly increased, met together to communicate to one another what they had seen. Having shut the doors, suddenly they beheld our Lord in the midst of them, full of light and glory, and He said to them, *Pax vobis, ego sum, nolite timere*—"Peace be to you, it is I, fear not."† They could not, however, believe that it was the same body which had died, but imagined it to be some other spiritual body; then Christ in order to undeceive them asked for something to eat. They gave Him a piece of broiled fish and a honeycomb. He ate and said to them, "Behold and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see Me to have."

2. Firstly, we must reflect how He disposes souls for the visits of Heaven; He desires first they should

\* Judith xv. 10; xiii. 22.

† St. Luke xxiv. 36.

walk by faith, and thereby merit other lights and supernatural visitations.

3. Secondly, we must reflect upon the words, "Peace be to you," with which He saluted them, which is the olive branch, the sign that He is God of peace, and that this is the fruit of the victory of Christ and His Kingdom which He desires that His children should taste in this life.

4. Thirdly, we must reflect upon those words, "It is I." He speaks as God, and let it be borne in mind what the meaning is which His words convey, namely, that He is God, for no one can speak to the soul with such authority unless it be God.

5. Let us reflect, fourthly, on the words, "Fear not." Our vessel is so small and the mercies of Heaven so excessive, that if God by His command did not free us from fear and widen the path, it would not suffice to receive even His mercies.

6. Let us reflect, fifthly, on the inestimable loving kindness with which, immortal as He now was, He set Himself to eat that He might thereby allay the perturbation of His Disciples, and allowed them to touch His divine flesh in order to convince them of their ignorance.

7. Let the soul be emboldened, forgetting for a season His Majesty and responding to His love, to speak to Him with loving and sweet affection, for in this the Lord takes pleasure.

*Second Point.*

8. Unhappily, St. Thomas was not present on this occasion, and when he was told on the following day

what they had seen, he was obstinately determined not to believe. For it seemed to him that they had all of them believed too readily, and that it was not sufficient they should have seen in order to believe, although the witnesses were so many and so competent, our Lady being one of them, nor that the circumstances which they recounted should have convinced them; in a word, he remained firm in his opinion during eight days. The following Sunday, Christ entered the place where they were, the doors being shut, and said the same words. Then turning to St. Thomas he said, "Put in thy finger hither and see My hands, and bring hither thy hand and put it into My side, and be not faithless but believing." Then Thomas was disturbed and convinced, and cast himself at the feet of Jesus and adored Him, saying, *Dominus meus et Deus meus*—"My Lord and my God."\* Christ answered, *Quia vidisti me Thomas, credidisti: beati qui non viderunt et crediderunt*—"Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and have believed."†

9. First, let us ponder upon the care of the Good Shepherd for His lost sheep; the extreme measures He takes for recovering it, even commanding him who was so unworthy to touch Him and put his hand into His side.

10. Secondly, we must reflect upon our own private judgment, how daring it is, how pride hardens it and makes it prefer its own opinion to the judgment of such persons as were those.

\* St. John xx. 28.

† St. John xx. 29.

11. Thirdly, we must reflect upon the benefits which God permitted should flow upon such permission. How many doubts are healed by this wound of Thomas? How many are confirmed thereby in the faith of a matter so important as the Resurrection?

12. Fourthly, let us consider how the light and the gentleness of God overcomes all men, however hard and well armed they may be. When Thomas saw that Christ knew what he had said in His absence, and that He offered him the very conditions which he had required in order to convince him, and that His Majesty was deterred by the obstinacy and hardness of His Disciple, then, full of wonder at so much bounty, he made that glorious confession.

13. Fifthly, let us ponder upon the reproof given by Christ, in order to give courage to us, and make us see and believe a mystery so full of consolation, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed" in Me.

### *Third Point.*

14. By the offering which Christ made to St. Thomas, that he should put his finger into His Wounds, we see that Christ preserved the marks of them so plainly that the Apostle was able to put his finger into them, and make the experiment which he desired.

15. These are the nests of the doves of Jesus, where they take refuge from the birds of rapine, and live upon the Blood which He has shed for them. Here the soul, filled with wonder, will inquire,

Wherefore, O my Lord, dost Thou bear these marks? And the Wounds will reply to him certifying that it is to show that the same Body that received them has risen again, and in order also to prove that Christ esteems Himself honoured by the outrages He received for the love of man, and to comfort our cowardice, and convince us that He does not forget us in the midst of His glory, since He holds us there written in His hands. Moreover, He presents them to the Father for us, to appease His anger and entreat His mercy, and by them also He will confound the despisers of His Blood at the Day of Judgment. Here may be excited many affections of love, confidence, admiration.

### WEDNESDAY.

#### MEDITATION III.—ON THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST OUR LORD.

##### *First Point.*

1. Christ appeared many times during the forty days to His Disciples, instructing them in the Kingdom of God, which is the Church. The hour of His departure into Heaven having arrived, He showed Himself to them whilst they were eating, and ate with them, reproving them for their incredulity in not believing those who had told them that He was risen again. He commanded them that they should remain in Jerusalem, and wait until they should be baptized by the flames of the Holy Spirit, as He had promised them on behalf of His Father; and having said this, He took them with Him to the Mount of

Olives, whence He was to arise into Heaven. Here we must reflect how the favour of seeing Him ascend into Heaven was preceded by reproofs. The reproaches which God addresses to us are greatly desired by souls who understand the character of God, because they are a great favour bestowed by Him, and an evident argument of the fervour of His love; for as His Majesty says, *Ego quos amo, arguo et castigo*—"Such as I love, I rebuke and chastise."\* This chastisement is reproof, by which God argues with, and convinces, and enlightens and humbles and purifies, the soul; and, when this is well understood, it adores the chastisement and greatly esteems it, keeping in its heart the truth which is taught thereby. And it is certain that behind the reproof there is even some great mercy hidden, and that His Majesty acts in this manner, and humbles and purifies us, in order to render us worthy of the favours of Heaven.

2. We must reflect upon what He said to His Disciples at the Last Supper, in reference to His departure, *Si enim ego non abiero, Paracletus non veniet ad vos*—"For if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you."† How pure does God desire that the soul should be which the Divine Spirit is to make its habitation! Souls soiled with earthly affections do not desire this ermine; and if, O my God, Thy most holy Humanity was a hindrance to Thy Apostles, not because it could not aid them to go to God, but because of that stupidity which was manifested by their looking at what was exterior—instead of entering, like the Blessed Virgin, into the Holy of Holies

\* Apoc. iii. 19.

† St. John xvi. 7.

of Thy Divinity—what hindrance must such filth and baseness as are found in the stable of my heart be to Thy purity? How can light and darkness be joined together? I do not fear, O my God, that Thou wilt not come to my dwelling, but only that Thou shouldst not bear with so degraded a creature. How is it that Thou dost not cast it away in Thine anger, and fling it out of Thy hand? Dispose of me, O divine fire, and reveal to me by Thy light the filthiness and lies to which I give the affection due alone to Thee, my glory, my riches, my true joy.

3. Let us consider the place which He chose whence to arise; even that same mountain where His Disciples had seen Him sorrowful and in tribulation, sweating blood, seized and trodden upon, in order that I may understand what the ladder was whereby He ascended to glory. Shall I, then, go on deceiving myself, and hiding myself from this light, only in order that I may not root out the love of those vain and filthy things? and shall I not comprehend that there is no path through the world whereby I can attain to joy and the glory of Heaven but that of Christ Crucified, despised and naked.

*Second Point.*

4. When they had ascended the Mount, He being in their midst and His Mother at His right hand, He told them that the hour had come for Him to return to His Father. It is clear that in His last converse with them He was more tender and loving than the imagination can conceive, and that He revealed to

them in few words all the love He had had for them, and to what extremes this love had carried Him Who was very God, seeing that, as they had beheld, He had concealed His Divine Person, and permitted Himself to be treated like any other man, in order to be able to complete the work of redemption; and that this same Ascension was another testimony of His love for us, for He was about thereby to present Himself before the Father, and to plead for us and govern us. He, moreover, showed His Disciples that He was taking His visible presence away from them, because it did injury to the Spirit, and in order that His invisible presence might remain in the most holy Sacrament, to exercise the faith, and to be the consolation of all faithful souls. When He had ended His discourse they adored Him one by one, and His Majesty blessed them.

5. The soul must occupy the whole of this point in affection of tenderness towards its ascended Lord, adoring Christ with the rest of His Disciples, begging of Him to bless it as one of His chosen, persuading itself that He is not absent except to the corporeal senses, and that it is a great wrong to estimate the knowledge which it has in common with the beast, and which is subject to deception, more highly than faith, which, if the soul be quickened by it, possesses most certainly this good, which is infinite and sufficient to burn up the soul with love, seeing that it is nothing but the desire which our Lord has for its welfare which constrains Him to remain here and not deprive us of the joy of having Him in person with us upon the earth.



*Third Point.*

6. Christ raised Himself by means of His own power through the air, and His Father sent His chariot to meet Him; for often has the Lord taken a cloud for His chariot. The Son entered within it, leaving behind Him only His flock, who could not take away their eyes from Heaven until two Angels clothed in white appeared to them, saying, *Viri Galilæi, quid statis aspicientes in cælum? hic Jesus, qui assumptus est a vobis in cælum, sic veniet, quemadmodum vidistis eum euntem in cælum*—"Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to Heaven? This Jesus Who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into Heaven?"\* On this point there is nothing more to be done than to let the soul go with Christ, and behold that glorious entrance, when those walls of brass were conquered for the first time, and the noble Victor passed over them. And here it may exclaim with the Prophet David, *Attollite portas principes vestras, et elevamini portæ æternales: et introibit rex gloriæ. Quis est iste rex gloriæ? Dominus fortis et potens: Dominus potens in prælio*—"Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of Glory shall enter in. Who is this King of Glory? the Lord Who is strong and mighty: the Lord mighty in battle."† And these words were repeated twice, by which is signified the affection of the Holy Fathers, to whom the Angels gave the tidings of the coming of the King of Glory to power. And they,

\* Acts i. 11.

† Psalm xxiii. 7, 8.

in their answer, asked, not through ignorance, but with an admiration full of delight, *Quis est iste rex gloriæ?*—"Who is this King of Glory?" Now may the soul ascend and behold each choir adoring Him as the natural King of His celestial Jerusalem, and all the hosts of Heaven worshipping Him. *Et adorent eum omnes angeli ejus*—"And all the Angels adore Him." And it will behold Him rising to the supremest heights of the empyrean, and sitting there as the Keystone of that celestial edifice; His Father placing Him at His right hand, and giving Him absolute power over all His creatures.

## THURSDAY.

MEDITATION IV.—ON THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

*First Point.*

1. That happy company went from the Mount of Olives to the supper-room with our Lady, as they had been commanded by Christ our Lord; and St. Luke says that they were all united together in prayer, and were sighing for that divine gift which God had promised to them. Those who were there present were about one hundred and twenty persons, with the Apostles, Disciples, and holy women, who followed His Majesty during His life. Here we must consider the dispositions of mind in which the Church placed herself in order to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, which was, and is, the soul of that mystical body formed by the Son of God upon earth through His doctrine and example. And he who meditates must spend a considerable season in seeking to know how

he must prepare a way for the Holy Spirit, in order that He may come to him as his Guest, and, as the Soul of his soul, may teach and direct all his actions. For blessed will he be who is prepared rightly to receive the Divine Spirit when He comes to dwell within his soul.

2. The means taught us by the Blessed Virgin and the Disciples are four — retirement, prayer, hope, and union. The recollection of the senses must be entire; for that is what God requires with so much rigour, since the Eternal Spirit will never dwell with an impure soul, which opens the doors in order to go forth and defile itself and unite itself to created things, with which the affections remain entangled. Nay, sometimes it is so ensnared by them that it never returns into the presence of its Creator, but perishes there and for ever.

3. Love towards, and union with, our neighbour attracts and retains the Holy Spirit within us; and the most fitting means whereby His coming may be hastened are continual prayer and meditation on the mysteries of Christ, on the divine mercies, and on the heinousness of sin, joining with all this a lively hope; nothing doubting but that through His infinite goodness this divine fire will come and set our hearts in flames. Man cannot conceive what power he has to move the infinite compassion of God if he show towards Him the confidence of a son, which alone can supply a thousand shortcomings and failings, because it covers them all, and heals wounds, and increases our good dispositions, and prevents the firm confidence which we have in His infinite goodness from being vain.

*Second Point.*

4. At the ninth hour of the day, ten days after the Ascension of Christ into Heaven, a great wind swept over the supper-room, which was heard throughout Jerusalem, and every one looked to see what it was. Then after the mighty wind, tongues of fire descended and rested upon the heads of all those who were there.

5. The Holy Spirit gave sensible tokens of His coming, in order that we who do not know or discern, excepting by means of the senses, may be enabled to understand the effects which this Divine Guest produces in the soul, through those which are produced by sensible elements. Thus the meditation upon this point must be directed to the effects produced by these two causes, air and fire. Let us consider what air is to the heart, and that if it is deprived of it for a moment, life is at an end. The Holy Spirit is this Breath of the soul, as it is said in the hymn, *Sine tuo numine, nihil est in homine, nihil est innoxium*—"If Thou take Thy grace away, nothing pure in man will stay; all his good is turned to ill." All is death and corruption, there remains no vital movement in men, because by His divine inspiration He alone continually maintains life in our souls. Sometimes He comes in so invisible and subtle a manner, that even the soul itself hardly perceives His entrance, and at other times He diffuses Himself in such a way as not to allow Himself to be seen by the eyes, and it is necessary for the soul to watch with attention in order to receive its Celestial

Guest, and not to cast out of its house the Breath by which our weakness is invigorated, and the Light which shows the soul its vileness and what it owes to God.

6. It is of great importance to know this Guest when He comes, in order that we may rightly esteem this jewel from Heaven, and so follow His inspirations that we may render ourselves worthy of another and yet another coming; for if we disown and undervalue Him, burying His light in forgetfulness, He will vanish, and no longer communicate the vital Breath in the way in which He did before, and the soul will perish miserably, suffocated in the fire of its own concupiscence.

7. Sometimes, though it is but seldom, He descends with power, and as a master takes possession of the house, tearing the heart of flesh, and giving in place of it a pure heart, converting the whole man, as He did with St. Matthew, St. Paul, St. Mary Magdalen, &c. It is well to know that He is wont to do this, and to beg of Him that He may, as a merciful God, give me what I do not merit.

#### *Third Point.*

8. This divine fire descended in the form of tongues, and took its seat upon the head of each one of them, and from that moment there was conferred upon them all the degree of doctors of the law of love, and they all began to give praise to God. *Prout Spiritus Sanctus dabat eloqui illis*—"According as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak."\* A great

\* Acts ii. 4.

number of devout men, of all nations under heaven, who had assembled together, having come to the Feast of Pentecost, were all confounded in mind, because every man had heard them speak in the tongue in which he was born. Then the ruder among them mocked, saying, "These men are full of new wine," but St. Peter hearing it, and rising in the midst of them, showed to them from the Scripture that this was the promise of God, to give His Divine Spirit to all flesh, and by these means he converted about three thousand souls.

9. Let us meditate upon the form in which the flame came, not in the likeness of hearts, but as tongues, the Holy Spirit thereby signifying that in having a tongue of fire man was already reformed, that if the tongue do not betray any passion or worldly affection, or offend in any way, then he is a perfect man. *Hic perfectus est vir*—"The same is a perfect man."\* As regards this matter, we have to set ourselves to a great work, namely, that of taming a viper, and bridling a lioness, or determining again and again to bridle it, no matter how often we may fail, for it is a laborious task, and one that will occupy many days; one, moreover, which involves the whole peace of our life, and is of great value, seeing that God takes great pleasure in it. Let us often repeat this verse, *Pone Domine, custodiam ori meo, et ostium circumstantiæ labiis meis*—"Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: and a door round about my lips."†

10. Let us reflect upon the resting-place chosen by Divine Love when He came to these happy souls

\* St. James iii. 2.

† Psalm cxl. 3.

who were congregated together, signifying thereby that He came as master of their house, lord of their powers, ruler of their actions. Here let us send forth ceaseless sighs for a spark of this fire. For this purpose we must have recourse to the fervent hymns addressed by the Church to the Holy Spirit at this Feast, repeating every day the *Veni Creator Spiritus* and the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, and let us see that we live for no other purpose than that of awaiting this Feast, that on its coming we may be born again as new creatures.

## FRIDAY.

## MEDITATION V.—ON THE MOST HOLY TRIINITY.

*First Point.*

1. The soul, which is a bird in the atmosphere of the spirit, raises itself by means of its two wings of contemplation and love, into this most pure and exalted sphere of the invisible beings of God, sometimes losing sight of even its very self, so that it cannot tell where it has been, or what it has done, but can only exclaim, "I rejoiced, I heard, I saw," because it is not lawful for man to speak of it, nor does he know how to give expression to it. We will say nothing to this happy soul respecting what it ought to meditate upon, for it has One Who guides, teaches, embraces, and enkindles it, but as this Divine Being is far removed from our knowledge, some observations may be made to enable us to meditate upon Him with enjoyment, ease, and profit.

2. In the Eternal Father two things have to be considered. Firstly, that He is the First Person, the

Fountain of the divine processions, and that in Him, as in a fountain, are united all the divine perfections—power, wisdom, goodness, independence, eternity, all justice, all mercy, all holiness, all providence, &c., and that His glory springs from Himself. On each of these attributes we may make very pure acts of love, after the manner shown us by St. Augustine when he says, “If I were God and Thou wert Augustine, I would seek to be Augustine, in order that Thou, O Lord, mightest be God.” These are the ecstasies of love, which make the soul delight in saying to God that it is well content not to be able to give Him anything, in order that His Majesty may have all good in Himself, and that from Him, as from a fountain, all must be received ; and then it adds, “O Lord, of my own will and desire, and pleasure, I rejoice in what Thou hast, and it is because Thou hast it that I delight in Thy Divine Being,” and God accepts this desire, and esteems this goodwill, and sees that this soul, in so far as it can, gives Him His Divine Being in will, in desire, in delight, since it cannot do it in any other way ; and in what way God repays these loving affections those know well who experience them.

3. There is another reason for giving praise to and delighting especially in the Father, which is that He should have so perfect a Son, the mirror of His Divine Being, of the same substance as Himself, and that a love so entire, so holy, and so substantial, should subsist between the Father and the Son. With regard to ourselves, there are a thousand reasons why respect and adoration should be given to our natural Lord,



and an equal number for the love we owe to our Creator, Preserver, Father, and Benefactor. Dwelling on these things, the soul is filled with wonder and thanksgiving at such an infinite number of benefits, of comforts, of servants, of pleasures, as minister to it, shed light upon it, nourish it, and give it joy. Blind indeed are the men who do not know or inquire who it is that gives them so many joys, so much beauty, so many benefits, and who are so deaf, that although all creatures who are made by God cry out with a loud voice, they do not hear them.

4. When the soul begins to meditate on the love which the Eternal Father must have felt in order to give to the sinful, ungrateful, blind world His only-begotten Son, it is overwhelmed with wonder and admiration, signified by Christ in those words, *Sic enim Deus dilexit mundum, ut Filium suum unigenitum daret*—"For God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son."\* And not content with this, the Father and the Son afterwards gave us their infinite love, the Paraclete, in order that He might rule and teach the Church and give to it life. The reason and affections, overwhelmed at all this, fail to comprehend such infinite goodness, and know not what to do, except to plunge themselves into two seas, the one of God's infinite charity, and the other of our infinite wickedness, ingratitude, and ignorance.

*Second Point.*

5. With regard to the Person of the Son of God, we have incurred many debts, well known, but ill

\* St. John iii. 16.

paid, by man. On this point we must consider profoundly all that we have in Jesus Christ, in order that we may know how to have recourse to Him, and to pray to Him, now as God, now as Intercessor, now as our eldest Brother and the natural Son of God, now as the Creator together with His Father, our beginning and our end. In order better to do this, we must behold a body and soul of the same kind as ours, which the Divine Word assumed for His Nature, taking it as His spouse in perpetual union, raising it to the throne, and endowing it with divinity in such a way that it is both God and Man. Seeing this, we shall delight in beholding the very God of God, the Father and Spouse of His beauty, of the same essence and substance as His own; we shall marvel at so new a favour, and that He should have united Himself with our nature, rendering it so pure, limpid, and tranquil, and enriching it with such millions of jewels as it was adorned with by the Holy Spirit on the day of espousals in the fruitful bed of Mary. We shall feel ourselves to be debtors for this infinite mercy, and will recognize in it the only remedy for our redemption and that of all the human race. Then shall we look up and behold man's nature raised to the crown and to the natural sovereignty over Angels and men, King and Head of all. Here are joys, blessings, congratulations, adorations, and prayers, for *Pater diligit Filium, et omnia dedit in manu ejus*—"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand."\*

6. From hence the soul will proceed to contemplate

\* St. John iii. 35.

all the troubles, afflictions, and outrages suffered by this Man-God for love of it, down to shedding the last drop of His Blood, and remaining in the most holy Sacrament for our nourishment, in order that our enemies may not make a prey of us when we are faint with hunger.

*Third Point.*

7. In the person of the Holy Spirit, Who is the Eternal Love, proceeding from the Father and the Son, there is much to call forth love, since to this Divine Spirit must be attributed all supernatural gifts, and the infinite inclination experienced by God to do us good, and to pardon our sins. In the absence of the Son, this Divine Love came to rule the holy Church, to defend it, to sanctify it, and to teach it.

8. The most tender emotions are those which arise in each soul, and are known to itself alone. These are awakened by recalling to memory what it owes to the inspiration and callings of the Holy Spirit, to the sins which He has pardoned, and the manner in which He has waited for it with so much patience. What has not this Divine Love done in order to separate us from evil? to remove us from all occasions of sin? Lastly, He sanctifies us in Baptism, arms us for the battle, supports us in the fight, and is ever ready to succour us when we are tempted, until He brings us safe into the harbour.

## SATURDAY.

MEDITATION VI.—OF THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT  
OF THE ALTAR.*First Point.*

I. This sea of mercies and marvels must be beheld from three points. First, to what God descends, and to what man rises. God descends into the breast of a vile creature, one who is often in mortal sin, and the creature who is in a state of grace rises into the breast of Christ our Lord. Let us meditate upon this rising which takes place when we receive Christ as our food, in order to transform us into Himself, and so welcome me to His breast. For if St. Paul ascended once to the third Heaven, and when he descended was so changed and so enkindled, then why should I not rise in like manner, my throne being so much higher and more eminent, that even the heavenly empyrean cannot be compared with it. Let the soul dwell with wonder and astonishment upon this point. How is it that God, Who has infinite fire in His breast, and has digested hearts of iron and made them divine, cannot digest or warm mine, but loathes it and threatens me, even as it is written, *Incipiam te evomere ex ore eo; quia dicis, Quod dives sum, et locupletatus, et nullius egeo*—"I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth; because thou sayest, I am rich, and made wealthy, and have need of nothing."\* How can I have indulged in such malice as that which I have shown in defending myself against the efforts of so-

\* Apoc. iii. 16, 17.

loving a God, of One Who so valiantly and pressingly assaults me? Let my soul reflect at leisure in what this rebellion consists, and determine to capitulate, and lay down the arms which it has taken up against God in defence of pleasures, high places, riches, and the world, whose ways are sins, weakness, and afterwards hell.

*Second Point.*

2. Although God comes to a creature to give it life, light, liberty, and eternal content, under the appearances of bread and wine, He is hidden, and abides in innumerable dark corners of the world, without splendour or greatness, subjected to such numberless injuries and disrespect as He receives every day, for love of those souls to whom He wishes well.

3. Let us meditate upon the end for which He came down from Heaven in so strange a livery, *Quare ut colonus futurus est in terra, et quasi viator declinans ad manendum?*—"Wherefore has He come near to our earth, and why does the Lord in His wanderings remain with us?" His intent is to destroy the enchantment by which the soul, which is a spirit, has allowed itself to die in the arms of the flesh, in order to serve its senses. Like one who is dead, it does not perceive its celestial Father, nor the lights or voices of Heaven, nor the nourishment of its life, which is the will of God. And it is for this that God took means for placing Himself within the limits of a morsel of bread, and entering in disguise into the soul and the heart, to speak with them, to enamour them with Himself, and to take from them the

affection which they formerly had for lying and filthy things.

4. Let us be filled with astonishment that God choosed to love and to value our souls. What a powerful remedy has He provided whereby to raise us to Himself! Let us be confounded at our madness, our drowsiness, our obstinacy, which a God Who even gives Himself wholly to us does not repair, whilst I haggle about giving Him the smallest thing. Let then the wretched soul, seeing that God gives Himself, yield itself also to be the slave of so loving a Lord.

*Third Point.*

5. How the creature treats its Creator, how rudely, how disgracefully and uncourteously! How carelessly it receives the loving kindnesses of God! How it despises the pearl set before it! What coldness it shows in accepting such an invitation! With what haste it leaves it! How little of it is retained in the soul! How cold this salamander remains, how frigid, amidst so many flames of love.

6. Let us reflect what it is which causes all this injury—namely, that we do not keep alive faith in this mystery. What trouble does not an ambitious subject take so that he may be permitted to speak familiarly with his King? And for this King of Heaven we take no trouble whatever! How is it that it should be so with men, unless because it is too great a thing for their narrow hearts to comprehend? God in my house, in my bosom, sustaining my life, giving me health, conversing with me, ordering my affairs! If by a lively faith that white curtain could

be raised, and we could see the Guest Who comes there, what different communions, preparations, and acts of thanksgiving would be ours? But faith is asleep, and our enemy entering within the field where this heavenly grain is planted, sows it with so many weeds, so many idle cares, distractions, and sins, that the divine corn is suffocated.

7. Here let the soul reflect upon the disparity between it and God, dwelling first upon the inequality between the persons, the independence of the Son of God, and our dependence upon His Majesty, so that even the things which we love more, and desire more than God, we cannot have without Him. Let us contemplate our depravity and His beauty; the incredible extremes to which His love carries Him; the abyss of our iniquity and of our ignorance, and the return we make for His goodness, by despising, forgetting, and showing ourselves ungrateful for His gifts and to the Giver. And here let us return, like the Prodigal Son, and turn our face towards our Father's house, and leave the hungry and desert region wherein we have lived until now.

### SUNDAY.

MEDITATION VII.—ON THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY INTO HEAVEN.

#### *First Point.*

1. After the Ascension of Christ into Heaven, His most holy Mother remained fifteen years with the new-born Church, taking it under her protection. The Son of God did not take her with Him, in order that,

as Mother, she might serve it with her prayers, her words, and her examples, and that she might take it in her arms when she saw it afflicted. It would, moreover, have been a pitiable thing if sun and moon had both failed it, before the paths of the law of grace had been clearly marked out and frequented. During these fifteen years, so great was the increase in the waters of love of this sacred sea, that at the close of them, in the sixty-third year of her age, they overflowed the life of her body, and the sweet tyrant exercised so much power and mastery over that slave of God, that her life was taken from her by those pure torments. The Queen of Heaven felt so great an increase in her affections, and such immeasurable anxiety to see God, that her life became the sacrifice. She fell sick, and it was her Son Himself Who gave her the news of her death. Full of joy, she nevertheless had a desire, before her departure, to see and give her parting benediction to the Apostles dispersed over the whole world. His Majesty granted her desire, and at one and the same moment, all the eleven were assembled in her apartment. Then the sweet Mother took leave of them with tender words; they wept over her loss; she consoled them with the assurance that she would not do less in Heaven, in defence of her sons, than she had done on earth, but rather much more; and having divided her poor possessions, which consisted of two gowns, between two poor girls who were her neighbours, and seeing at her side Christ our Lord, and all around her bed the eleven Apostles, the Queen ascended from this mortal life to take possession of Heaven.



*Second Point.*

2. The Apostles interred the holy body in a sepulchre of new marble, and having finished their offices, the Angels began theirs with the sound of voices and instruments. Three days having passed, the music ceased, and the Faithful who had heard it prepared to depart, when suddenly St. Thomas came from the East Indies, where he had been, and he who had hesitated to believe in the Resurrection of Christ our Lord, believed in what they told him of the songs sung by the Angels, and in order that he might be a witness, God permitted that he should not arrive with the others, and testify to the resurrection of the Mother as he had done to that of the Son. He begged the Apostles that they would allow him to see and adore the holy relics. They were all of them willing, and went to the tomb, and found nothing therein but the linen in which they had wrapped her, and then they all were assured in their souls that she had gone in the footsteps of her Son, after remaining three days in the sepulchre without corruption, and on the third day rising again and ascending to Heaven, to be the light of the city of God, and this has ever remained a tradition of the Church.

*Third Point.*

3. The Blessed Virgin ascended in body and soul accompanied by the Eternal King, leaning upon His arm and His infinite strength, and with them came the whole Court of Heaven. The Son seated her on His right hand, and the most Holy Trinity crowned

her as the Queen of all creation, raised above all the choirs of Heaven, and above every pure creature. The admiration which these celestial spirits felt at sight of her riches and beauty is given in the words of the Canticle, *Quæ est ista, quæ ascendit de deserto, deliciis affluens, innixa super dilectum suum*—"Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delight, leaning upon her Beloved."\* They marvelled and were filled with admiration, that out of this dry and desert earth should spring a flower of such sweetness and such delicious odour, and which had given such perfect fruit. From admiration they broke out into praises, saying, *Pulchra ut luna, electa ut sol, terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata*—"Fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array."†

4. And now our Queen and our glorious Mother remains for ever in Heaven, for the consolation, joy, and shield of her little children. It is her desire that we should all take her for our Mother, in order that we may be raised in her arms to eternal bliss. Upon these three points no reflections are given, because tender devotions will clothe themselves in the tender epithets which are connected with these points, such as reflections upon how we may become servants of the Queen, and rejoice in her glory, and how we are to unite ourselves with those who are dear to her, and not to depart out of her circle or her favour.

\* Cant. viii. 5.

† Cant. vi. 9.

*Conclusion of this Treatise.*

5. These are the materials for those who walk by meditation and consideration of the mysteries and virtues of Christ, whereby those happy souls who take this road gain eternal life with great consolation and in perfect company, and by means of a plain and frequented path, out of which they cannot wander.

6. He who cannot succeed in meditation, must not on that account give up these mysteries, because then the staff will fail him, and he will fall. He must, on the contrary, raise himself, if he be engaged in contemplation, to a knowledge of the Divinity, and if his prayer be in acts of virtues, the affections, upon whatever mysteries they may be, will be better than if they had been made alone, and so on with the rest of the ways, for Christ our Lord is the way and the gate for all, even as His Majesty says, *Ego sum via, et veritas, et vita: nemo venit ad Patrem, nisi per me*—"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by Me."\* There is no exception, and not only is it no hindrance for those who are called to the tranquillity of contemplation, but it opens to them the gate and smooths the path to the Divinity, in Whose light we live.

\* St. John xiv. 6.



## A SPIRITUAL COMPENDIUM.

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### Third Treatise.

*Of the Dialogues between Christ and the Soul  
His Spouse.*

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#### INTRODUCTION.

**I**N order that all kinds of persons, no matter how advanced they may be in spirit, or how highly favoured by our Lord, may know what there is to learn in this Compendium, I have placed at the end of it this short colloquy, wherein, as in a mirror, every one may see from what spirits the interior movements arise, and, likewise, the failings which each one has, in order that he may cease from falling into them, and render himself more agreeable in the eyes of God. I should not be able to tell, even if I desired, whether this golden work has been the invention of any learned and perfect man, who desired to bring to the level of our understanding the divine secrets which were taught him by Heaven, as other Fathers among the mystics have done, or whether it is really that which it is entitled to be, a true and real conversation

of Christ our Lord with some beloved Religious, His spouse, and who, being vowed thereto by her spiritual director, revealed these secrets in writing, concealing her name, so that there would remain no trace or memory of it in the world.

It is true that the opinion we have of an author engenders in us an esteem for his work, but this heavenly treatise, above all which has been written in our day, least requires any credit of this kind ; for the simplicity of its style, the weight of its arguments, the majesty of its answers, the propriety of its words, the disposition of its thoughts, the comprehension of the matter of which it treats, the sublimity of the doctrine, the authority with which it is taught, the spiritual tone which pervades it, the serious tenderness of its intercourse, the sweet severity with which it reproves, the wonderful clearness with which it satisfies, the fire which it infuses into whoever reads it, the liberty with which it enters upon and treats the most occult of sciences, the determined manner in which it assumes authority and banishes vain fears, and the precision which marks it throughout, strongly incline us to believe (seeing how small and inadequately incapable the human mind is of such an offspring) that all its teaching had its origin from Heaven.

I only wish one thing—namely, that whoever reads this work with due respect, may incline to this pious view. May he follow the humble author with envy, who, as a just man, ate in this life of the fruit of this invention, and in death left nourishment and light to posterity.

## DIALOGUE I.

ON THE DIFFERENCE THERE IS BETWEEN SPIRITUAL  
AND SENSIBLE AFFECTIONS.

THE SPOUSE. I greatly desire, my Spouse and my Lord, to know what I must do in the affliction and the joys which I alternately feel, for I fear to offend Thee as much by ill-regulated sorrow as by vain gladness.

2. CHRIST. If thou always preservest this fear, and doth never forget it, thou wilt never be hurried into extremes of joy or sorrow, but wilt ever show moderation and modesty both in the one and the other, never being over much oppressed with grief in the time of affliction, or indulging too much in gladness in the season of joy, because it is by these excesses I am offended.

3. THE SPOUSE. But how, my Lord, can I be moderate in my gladness unless I am to be moderate also in my love towards Thee, for the delight must be in proportion to the love? And how can I be moderate in my sorrow, unless I am to be so in grieving over the sins I have committed against Thee?

4. CHRIST. In order to give an answer to thy question, thou must know, My spouse, that there is a spiritual joy, a desire and a love, which springs from an act of comprehension of God. And the moderation of which I spoke to thee does not apply to this kind of joy and love. On the contrary, this gladness, desire, and love, when rightly understood, must be without measure, for by them the act of

knowing God is rendered more perfect, and the more perfect this act is, the more perfect also is the desire and gladness, and thus they react upon each other, the one perfecting the other, until the soul becomes a Cherubim in intelligence, and a burning Seraphim in love and joy. There is, likewise, a spiritual sorrow and extremity of grief, which springs from an act of comprehension of the heinousness of the sin committed against Me; and the moderation of which I spoke to thee does not apply to this kind of sorrow, which ought to be without measure, and which completes, neither more nor less, the act of comprehension and abhorrence of the sin; and the more perfect that is, so much the more perfect also will be the sorrow, and thus the one will complete the other, in the same manner as the love.

5. There is another kind of joy, desire, and love, which is sensible, and which comes from God to the imagination and a sensible appetite of joy and delights which exists in the will, as was shown in My Transfiguration, which communicated to My Body the joy and glory of My Soul. And this sensible joy and love expands the heart, flushes the face, and causes tears of gladness; and it is this which I desire thee to moderate, because it is very different from, and foreign to, the other spiritual joys; and that to such a degree, that it makes war upon it and opposes it, and if the imagination and the appetite are allowed to indulge much in it, it blinds the understanding and befools the will, and the soul is transformed into flesh, and made like to hyenas, which laugh without sense or harmony. Then, too, it breaketh forth into

insane and absurd language, which ignorant people imagine to be supernatural, when it is really nothing but madness and folly.

6. There is another kind of sorrow, oppression, and hatred, which is sensible, and comes from God to the sensitive imagination and appetite. This sensible sorrow oppresses the heart, and makes it utter sighs and shed tears. And it is this sensible sorrow, oppression, and hatred, which I wish thee to moderate, because it is very different from that other spiritual sorrow, to which it is so opposed, when carried to an immoderate extent, that it blinds the understanding and befools the will, in the same way as the other ill-regulated joy, and by means of it many are led to commit desperate actions, and to kill themselves, like Judas. Thus, there being a sensible joy, desire, and love, and a sensible sorrow, hatred, and oppression, it is most necessary to moderate them, because otherwise they become pestilential.

7. THE SPOUSE. O Jesus, my Spouse, how does it delight my soul to listen to these truths! But tell me, when this joy does not spring from love of Thee, nor this sorrow from having offended Thee, but from I know not what, what then must I do?

8. CHRIST. Thou art indeed a child in spirit if thou terrifiest thyself, thou knowest not wherefore, and rejoicest for nothing. If I desired thee to use moderation when thy joy and thy sorrow had some foundation, how much more necessary is it when thou hast no cause or reason for joy or sorrow.

9. THE SPOUSE. I do indeed see it, but it is not in my own power.



10. CHRIST. If it be not in thy power, then make a virtue of necessity, because sometimes I give permission to demons, although in due limits and measures, to afflict, tempt, and prove My spouses, even as the devil did Job, in order that they may know and humiliate themselves, and may exercise patience, which is the daughter of charity, as My Apostle says. For thou knowest that when I was in the world, I went about and preached that there was no greater charity than to suffer for the beloved, even to the giving our life for him, if necessary, as I did. But to enjoy favours, pleasures, and delights through the respect and love felt for the beloved, may be done by any one, whilst to taste the bitterness of grief and afflictions both interior and exterior, through love of the beloved, is what very few do, and of these few thou must be one. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst to suffer afflictions, temptations, and sorrow through love of Me, for they shall be satisfied with the food of which My Apostle has so often spoken, saying that it is not given to those who are infants in strength, but to men who have increased in virtue.

11. The child grew, says the Scripture, and was weaned, and Abraham had a great feast the day that he was taken from the breast. In like manner, those who have grown up are deprived of the milk of joys and consolations, and are given to eat of sorrows and afflictions, and on that day a festival takes place in My celestial Court, and not a mourning celebration, as thou dost imagine. Dost thou not see Me in the Apocalypse, with My breasts girded with a cincture of gold? And wert thou not lost in admiration at

beholding My breasts girded and not My waist, and with a cincture of gold, and not of iron? Thou must understand that the love which I bear thee, and the joy I have to see thee grow in grace, although thou dost not perceive it (nor is it well thou shouldst do so), makes Me withhold My consolations.

12. And it is not because I abhor thee, as thou believest to be the case, for those whom I love I chastise and afflict; and if troubles and chastisement were consent to sin, if to hear were to love, if to undergo pain were to take pleasure, then thou wouldst do well to inquire whether I was angry with thee when thou wast plunged in a sea of troubles and afflictions, and various and idle imaginations. But it is not so; on the contrary, there is more difference between pain and guilt, and between hearing and desire than between Heaven and earth, because in the one there is guilt and offence to Me, and in the other not, but rather there is merit, if thou hast patience and humility. In the one I delight, and by the other I am offended, and thus thou art wrong in afflicting thyself because of that which gives Me pleasure.

13. Remember that those who came down Jacob's ladder were Angels as well as those who ascended it, and it is so with My spouses, whom I humble with trials and raise with favours, whom I grieve by my absence and delight with the hope of Me. Dost thou desire that the wedding-feast should last for ever? But remember that this is not possible in this life of penitence, as it will be in the life of glory. Does it

seem to thee well to desire that this place of exile should be thy country, and this prison of misery the paradise of delight? No, certainly; nor dost thou desire to be greater than My Apostle, to whom, in order that he might not be puffed up with pride, the angel of Satan, that thorn in the flesh, was sent, which afflicted and distressed him, and made him entreat of Me many times that I would take it away from him; and I did not will to do so, in order that the virtues of patience, humility, and charity might be perfected in the furnace of grief and affliction.

14. And do not tell Me that thou dost not know whether it is thus with thee, and that, on the contrary, thou fearest whether perhaps thou art not already beginning to suffer the hell which is being prepared for thee. Far from thee be any such thought, My spouse, since, through My goodness and mercy, thou hast not fallen into any mortal sin. Dost thou know whom this fear becomes? Souls who, being in great conflict, are likewise in a state of mortal sin. And do not tell me that thou perchance art in such state, for to those who do according to that which is in them I do not deny My grace; and this thou hast already done many and many times, according to thy power, thou hast reflected upon thy sins and grieved over them, and received the Sacraments.

15. I conclude by saying that if these truths do not give thee strength, but thou dost still consider thyself to be unworthy to suffer afflictions and troubles, it is because thou art full of self-love and carnal appetites, which do not permit thee to see the light of these truths, nor to long for them or love them. Take My

counsel, and make a firm resolve henceforth to look upon bitters as sweets and sweets as bitters, and thou shalt see what great peace thou shalt possess; and wait for light when thou art in darkness, and for darkness when thou art in light, and thou shalt find by experience that it will pass as it did in the case of My friend Job. And thus I deal with My friends and spouses, showing Myself to them for a brief space and then absenting Myself for a little while, in order by the one to ground them in humility, and in the other to enkindle them with love, which are the two things I most desire and wish to engrave in them, as thou wilt see in thyself if thou wilt pay heed to it.

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## DIALOGUE II.

IN WHICH THE MATTER IS DEALT WITH MORE AT LENGTH, AND FURTHER SIGNS GIVEN WHEREBY TO DISTINGUISH SPIRITUAL FROM SENSIBLE AFFECTIONS.

**THE SPOUSE.** I greatly desire, my Lord, that Thou wouldst repeat all Thou hast said to me in a few words, in order that I may better understand and remember it, seeing that my memory is weak.

2. **CHRIST.** All that I have hitherto said to thee may be summed up in four things, which I ordinarily make thee feel in prayer and spiritual exercises—namely, delight and spiritual joy; delight and sensible joy; the food of infants; the food of men. And although these four points were sufficiently explained

before, still, in order that thou mayest better understand them, I must warn thee of an error that thou mayest avoid it, for it is one into which not only rude and ignorant persons are accustomed to fall, but frequently great men and philosophers. It is to confound together and to consider as one and the same, spiritual joy and sensible joy; or, at any rate, if they do not do this they deceive themselves very often in taking the sensible for the spiritual. The consequence of this is, first, that by not moderating the sensible joy they fall into great follies, the devil doing all he can to stir up this affection.

3. Secondly, a false rule and measure is often used for judging of the goodness and malice of moral deeds. For it must be borne in mind that in good moral philosophy the goodness or malice of your deeds lies principally in the will; and, in order to know whether this will be good or evil, we must chiefly look at the end, which is nothing else but that on which the will dwells and rests and reposes, which repose and rest I term the spiritual delight and joy, by which your good or evil deeds are to be judged. Thus, if your joy is in a good thing your deed is also good, and if in an evil thing it is evil.

4. And thus, this spiritual joy of the will I take to be the measure and rule of the goodness or malice of your moral deeds, and not the sensible delight of your appetite and senses as rude and ignorant persons imagine, who take as the measure of their works this sensible delight, and who consider only such works to be good and very precious as are accompanied by it, deeming those to be of no value

where such sensible delight is wanting. Thus they consider prayer wherein there are no joys and no leapings of heart, obedience, discipline, confession and communion, and all the other works which they perform, as of no worth whatever, and as thrown away, if this sensible joy and gladness be wanting. But it is not so; for, as I said before, this kind of joy must not be the measure employed, but only spiritual joy. See, then, that thou take good heed, and do not deceive thyself; for it is not a fault of the heart not to sigh and laugh with joy, seeing that this is merely sensible delight, which ignorant persons mistake for spiritual. Observe well that spiritual joy is nothing else but a repose of the will in the things which it actually loves; and this is the true spiritual delight; the imaginative and wandering sentiments of your appetite and senses are not spiritual joy.

5. It is true that this sensible delight, when it exists in moderation, is a great help to the spiritual; therefore, those do not do well who desire totally to avoid such delight and sensible joy in their good works, saying the whole matter is not contained in them; therefore, do thou use discretion and prudence, profiting by such things as are suitable.

6. THE SPOUSE. All this seems very good to me, and gives me light. And now, my Lord, hearing Thee speak of this joy, and calm, and repose of the will, so worthy to be loved, seeing that it is so precious and so safe, I understand the mercy which Thou hast shown to me in my prayer, without having merited it or been aware of it. Because I see that in my prayers there has generally been this repose,

delight, and joy of my will in Thee, without the tumult of other various considerations or thoughts, which sometimes disturb me more than they aid me. For indeed I have stronger faith in Thee, my Spouse, than in anything which can be said to me by human reason, and even by the Angels and all other creatures in Heaven and earth.

7. CHRIST. I knew that I should bring thee to Me by this path of recollection, quiet, and delight in Me, without thy valuing it as it deserved, and it troubled Me to see thee vexed, imagining thou hadst lost time, because thou couldst not employ thyself in meditations and considerations as at other seasons, and as thou hadst heard say other persons had. Do not, however, admit the thought of being henceforward oppressed by that in which thou oughtest to rejoice, because this prayer of recollection and calm is much better than meditation and consideration, between it and which there can be no comparison, for meditation is but the path which leads to the better one of calm. This is the sleep and the repose which I keep for My spouses, and when they betake themselves to it, I call upon the daughters of Jerusalem (which are thoughts and considerations), by the stags and the goats of the field, not to disturb or awake My beloved, until she desire.

8. And this calm, peace, and repose can nowhere be better enjoyed than in solitude; and in this, if thou consider it well, thou hast received another most singular mercy, which is, a continual desire to avoid communication with creatures, however holy they may

be, and to live with Me alone in solitude, because, of a truth, no one can be in better company than when he is alone with Me. Take heed, and see that it be not said of thee, "The blessing was not known until it was lost." And doubtless thou wilt lose this desire of solitude, this kind of prayer, unless thou esteem it according to its merits, placing it before all other works to which thou art not compelled by obedience.

9. THE SPOUSE. It fills me with fear to hear this threat, my Spouse, nevertheless I will esteem these two things more than ever I have done before, in order that I may be more entirely Thine, and that Thou mayest be more entirely mine. And since Thou hast so clearly explained to me what is the food of infants and the food of men, show it to me now more in detail, in order that I may begin to be strong in my works.

10. CHRIST. Glory be to My Father, that thou shouldst be occupied with such desires; may He preserve and perfect them, until through them He gives thee glory, and until thou shalt enjoy Him for ever.

11. Thou must know, My spouse, that the food of infants is the consolation and sensible delights which at the beginning of their conversion and intercourse with Me I am wont to give them as milk, and frequently when they are in a state of mortal sin, and not loving Me above all things.

12. In this milk and food of infants are included the revelations, visions, and raptures, discernment and recognition of spirits, and all the intellectual graces



which are called *gratis data*, which frequently are united with mortal sin, and of which My Apostle, when writing to the Corinthians, made a catalogue ; and which were greatly prized by him whilst he was in a state of infant and of recent conversion. When he said that he spoke in various tongues like a child, and had the spirit of prophecy like a child, and visions and revelations and raptures like a child, in such abundance, that at his conversion he had been enjoying this milk for three days, during which he was raised to the third Heaven ; so that it was necessary to take the breast from his mouth in order that he might not suffer, and have other bitter food given to him, namely, that thorn in the flesh which was the angel of Satan, and which afflicted and oppressed him so much, that weeping like a child that is weaned he entreated Me to give him My consolations, and I did not will to give them to him because so much milk would have done him harm and he would have died, falling in the spirit of pride ; to this danger all those are exposed who feed on this children's food, which pampers and inflates souls with pride.

13. However, when the time arrived wherein he had attained to full growth and was ready to taste the food of men, as I announced to him by My servant Ananias, which food is suffering, he left the children's food entirely, and exchanged it for that suitable to men. Of this food he speaks to the same Corinthians, namely, patience, divers tribulations, troubles and afflictions, mortification and the Cross, which he so greatly prized ; and which virtues

are solid food that do not permit the association with them of mortal sin, as did the children's food.

14. I have now told thee what are the consolations Thou hast to choose, and the food most suitable for thee to partake of; choose therefore the best if thou desirest to hit the mark. Let me do to thee according to My will, and I will give thee every hour and every moment the food which is most suitable for thee, if with humility and resignation thou preparest to receive it.

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### DIALOGUE III.

IN WHICH THE PRAYER OF QUIET IS EXPLAINED,  
WITH ITS PROPERTIES AND NAMES.

THE SPOUSE. O my most sweet Jesus, my Lord and my Spouse, how hast Thou consoled me in giving me so clearly to understand that spiritual and not sensible joy is the clear sign and manifest test of the goodness or badness of my deeds; and therefore, from henceforward, although I may be full of evil thoughts and pestilential temptations, I will not pay any heed to them if I find that I have no deliberate and wilful spiritual pleasure in them. And, on the other hand, when I am full of good and holy thoughts, and delight and repose myself in them, I will greatly rejoice, because this joy is a manifest sign of the mercies that I receive from Thee; I say spiritual, and not sensible, joy, because by it I will

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measure the goodness or badness of my deeds, and not by what is sensible.

2. I have likewise been consoled by the lights which Thou hast shed upon the food of infants and men, which is a thing that I wished to know more clearly and distinctly; and, above all, it consoles my soul to meditate upon the favour which Thou hast shown me, without any merit of mine, in giving me this kind of prayer, which is certainly the prayer of quiet and spiritual joy and repose in Thee, and which is, moreover, the end of all other meditations and considerations. This matter being, therefore, so necessary for me, and it having been dealt with by Thee so briefly in the last dialogue, I pray Thee explain it to me more in detail.

3. CHRIST. It is well seen, My spouse, that thou hast My Spirit, since thou askest of Me that which I so greatly desired. With regard to the first point, thou must know that the end and aim of contemplation is to behold with a clear and pure vision whatever is revealed to thee by faith of My Divinity and My perfections, My being, power, goodness, and beauty, reposing lovingly the while in Me, and uniting thyself to Me with the utmost sweetness, delight, and force of love, as thou art wont often to do. This love in proportion as it is more fervent unites thee in more intimate union with Me in this life, and afterwards in Heaven, because according to the degree of love is the degree of union, grace, and glory.

4. THE SPOUSE. I well understand, by what Thou hast said, in what real contemplation consists. But

now I desire to know how the soul arrives at this sovereign contemplation.

5. CHRIST. Thou askest what thou already knowest by experience. Bear in mind that the way to prepare thy soul for the contemplation of Me is to forget everything in Heaven and on earth, and not to allow the soul to enter into discussions with the understanding, but to behold My infinite being and goodness and beauty, and to love Me with incredible sweetness, joy, quiet, and repose, which forgetfulness is what My servants call by another term, styling it interior recollection of the soul; because it puts away all the thoughts and desires which are occupied with various subjects, and employs and turns them to Me with supreme and actual love, desire, joy, and rest.

6. This forgetfulness is likewise termed spiritual silence, because by the speech of the soul is meant the thinking of this thing or the other; and when thou dost cease to think of these things in quiet, beholding Me only, and listening to Me, then is the soul silent.

7. This forgetfulness is likewise termed not thinking of anything, that is to say, of created things; not however of the Creator, for I am the object and blessed aim of thy understanding and thy will; not that the understanding does not apprehend, but that, beholding Me through simple vision and apprehension only, the soul loves much. For thou must know that thou canst not love if thou dost not first understand, and that the knowledge of My infinite good always precedes and accompanies thy love.

8. This which I have told thee is the prayer of quiet, recollection, and silence, which thou art

engaged in at present, and in which thou wilt be always unless thou art ungrateful, careless, and proud; and it is a prayer that will never end throughout all the ages of My eternity. For thou knowest what is written, that charity never fails; and Mary, the type of contemplation, chose it, and it will never be taken from her for ever. Do thou guard it likewise, for thou must know that it is a kind of prayer which I do not give to all, and that it is a very noble, divine, and sweet exercise, because it is not mingled with consideration and operation of the understanding, and therefore does not cause so much fatigue, and can keep the soul employed for a long season with much enjoyment; and it is all the more delightful when thou associatest it with My Humanity, learning from My Humanity and My Infancy to be as a little child in thy own eyes, for to such I promise My Kingdom, to enjoy it with Me eternally.

## DIALOGUE IV.

OF THE THORNS WHICH CHOKE THE FRUIT OF PRAYER, AND OF THOSE WHICH MAKE IT TO GROW.

CHRIST. Thou knowest I love thee more than the apple of My eye, and more than My life, for I gave My life for thee. Thou art, as it were, always contemplating Me with a glad and loving gaze, because thy soul is in My grace, and is pure and spotless, at least in desire; and to such I say, in My Gospel, that they behold Me, and enter into the bridal-chamber of My everlasting espousals, where nothing filthy or unclean can enter. Therefore, because of the ineffable love with which I love thee, and am zealous for thy progress, and in order that thou mayest profit and increase in the prayer of recollection and quiet which in My goodness I give thee, I admonish thee with severity and rigour to avoid certain thorns which hinder quiet and recollection.

*First Thorn.*

2. Is it possible that thou dost not understand that inordinate anxieties are thorns which suffocate in thy soul the seed of glorious and blessed quiet and of the prayer of recollection? Is it possible that thou dost not perceive that these inordinate anxieties are not (through My goodness) about riches, or home, or flesh and blood, such as the children of this world experience, but about being more just,

holy, pure, and inflamed? Is it also possible thou dost not understand that this sensible anxiety and care are vicious and evil in thee, because they are so inordinate? If thou dost not recognize these wolves in sheep's clothing, look at the affection and deeds which they cause in thee, and by these things thou shalt know them.

3. See how this anxiety robs thee of the recollection, the calm, and the peace of thy soul, which is a good beyond all other goods, and which I announced to the sound of celestial music on the night of My birth, when I proclaimed, "Peace on earth to men of goodwill;" and which I left on earth the last night of My Supper, when I said to My Disciples, "My peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you," for in it I die.

4. Dost thou not see that this anxiety renders thee unfaithful and rebellious to the counsels of thy confessors, and that being so to them thou art also so to Me, Who have said, "Whoever despises you, despises Me." But now look well at this thy anxiety and restlessness, and thou wilt see the reason of it; that it is a deficiency of humility—it is pride and self-love, which desire to have all things at once according to their taste and pleasure.

5. It is a want of humility, because thou desirest to excel the just, whom I told thee fall seven times a day, that they may know themselves and be known, and that they may humble themselves and be humbled. Thou neither desirest to know thyself nor to be known, nor to humble thyself or be humbled. Consider what the Scripture says, that thou must not

desire to be just beyond measure, for then thou wilt be wholly absorbed in thy justice, which is a clear token that it is thy justice and not Mine; for Mine interferes with nothing, whilst thine injures thy peace greatly, making thee fear to excess where thou hast nothing to fear, separating thee from Me, and delivering thee into the hands of My enemies and thine; robbing thee of the light and repose of thy soul, and leaving thee in darkness and restlessness. Thus thou wilt experience the truth of the proverb, "The highest justice is the highest cruelty and injustice," and thus thou wilt pay the penalty of thine own fault.

6. It is meet for thee, then, to be humble, and not to presume so much; teach thyself to derive humility from thy faults, and not bitterness and restlessness; for thou givest Me more pain, and offendest Me more, by the restlessness which thy sins produce in thee than by the sins themselves, seeing they are as nothing, whilst the loss of peace is a great thing. Does it seem to thee that this is a right kind of justice? No, certainly; on the contrary, it is very wrong, since, in order to avoid a small evil, thouallest into another and a greater, and in order to purify thy soul thou soilest it; for uneasiness is an abomination and a great misery, because it is opposed to the blessedness which I promise to the peaceful.

7. I perceive already that thou wilt tell Me thou dost not trouble thyself about present faults, but only about past sins. To this I reply, that thou must not trouble thyself either about these or those, but thou must make many intentions and resolutions, and endeavour to fulfil them, and not put any faith in, or



give any credit to, thy memory, which is very weak and slippery, and cannot remember to-day what thou didst yesterday, much less a long time ago. Moreover, thou must as little believe in thy understanding, and do not enter into discussion with it; for an inordinate fear whether thou art in a state of sin or not, blinds it, and the blind understanding creates and forms blind reasons which blind thee, and take from thee the light thou dost ordinarily possess.

8. All this would be accomplished if thou wert humble, and believed in thy confessors. And if thou didst but follow the example of My Apostle (recall to mind what he did), and like him, prize only one thing—namely, to forget all the past, and direct all thy care to the things that are before, in order to shun sin and follow virtue, and not spend thyself in looking at what thy memory and understanding place before thee, and which are things I have forgotten. For when the sinner laments over his sins, I forget them. And do not tell Me thou hast not sorrowed over them, but believe that thou hast, since thy confessors have told thee so; otherwise, thou art guilty of pride and want of faith.

9. THE SPOUSE. O my most sweet Jesus, how true is all this! I resolve from to-day never to take any account of my memory or understanding, but to look upon all that disturbs the quiet and repose of my soul as a plain temptation of the devil.

*Second Thorn.*

10. CHRIST. We have not done with thy thorns; there are others not less painful and hurtful, because

if thou wert robbed of thy peace by the first thorn, these attack thy Communion, respecting which thou disturbest thyself as to whether they have been worthy or unworthy, whether thou continuest to receive Me or not to receive Me. And in order to put an end to the matter in two words, for to use more would add nothing to the purpose, communicate when he who has power to do so commands thee—namely, thy confessor or thy Prelate, and believe that thou dost receive Me according to thy desire and pleasure unless thou receivest, as I have said by My Apostle and by Councils, in the consciousness of being in a state of mortal sin. Venial sin (not present, but past) is not of so much importance, and is wiped away by the Communion itself, when thou hast not thy confessor at hand. Lay aside thy scruples, and do not lose a season or an opportunity of receiving Me, because of any exaggerated estimate of small faults. Make use of the remedies of which I have told thee, and others of which thou knowest, smiting thy breast, holy water, &c., and calm thyself, and communicate, and thou shalt see how it will be with thee.

11. THE SPOUSE. Of a truth, Lord, I will act thus from henceforth, because from the experience I have many times had, I feel that it is productive of great good to me. Tell me, however, my Lord, what is past sin, and what is present?

12. CHRIST. Past venial sins are those thou didst commit yesterday, or even to-day, before receiving Communion. Present sin is that which thou hast actually the will to commit at the present moment;

that is to say, such or such small untruth, such or such little murmur, or idle conversation, and it is a present venial sin, which, although it does not prevent habitual grace or its increase, still it hinders that which is called actual, and this is a great loss. Moreover, it shows a great boldness, a want of reverence and fear of Me; and, therefore, thou must not approach and receive Me in a state of present venial sin; but past venial sins should not prevent thee. Being confirmed in this truth, rest in it, without listening to a crowd of opinions, unless thou desirest to be always plunged into a state of restlessness, and to lose many communions, and losing these, also to lose great grace, perfection, and repose.

*Third Thorn.*

13. CHRIST. Now that I have begun to treat of the thorns and the things which disturb thee, and sometimes suffocate the peace and calm of thy recollection, I desire to pass on to others which afflict thee sorely when thou art withdrawn from the exercises of contemplation to those of active life. To this affliction is afterwards added another, the doubt whether such a feeling is an imperfection or an evil thing; and thus the thorns of thy love go on multiplying themselves, which, however, would not afflict thee if thou wouldst recall to memory what I have told thee many times, which is, that the exercises of the contemplative life must be thy desire, and those of the active life thou must accept with patience, because it is better for thee to enjoy the

beauty of Rachael and the repose of Mary, than the blear eyes of Leah and the toils of Martha; for better and more meritorious are the exercises of contemplation than those of action.

14. But although this be so, cases may arise in which action may be better for a season than contemplation; that is to say, when out of the abundance of charity, or when holy obedience or necessity requires it, thou dost patiently suffer to be separated for some time from the quiet and repose of contemplation, and apply thyself to action, not forgetting, in as far as thou canst, to exercise contemplation in the action itself. For then the person will be occupied with the whole, and not with one of the parts only; that is to say, it will not only be occupied in contemplation, which is one of the parts of the Christian life, nor in the active only, which is the other part, but in the whole, which is made up of action and contemplation, and is better than each of these portions taken separately.

15. Therefore, I do not say of Mary that she chose the whole of the Christian life, but only the better part of that whole, which is contemplation, as has been said. Because of the good things the best must be chosen, when it is not possible to have them both together, as was the case with thee when thou wert but a child in virtue.

16. And with the exception of these three cases of charity, obedience, and necessity, it is better to follow the exercises of contemplation than those of action; therefore, from henceforth thou must not leave them unless compelled by one of these three

things, and be determined in this matter, otherwise thou lovest much if thou art not.

17. THE SPOUSE. All that thou sayest to me, Lord, seemeth very good. Nevertheless, I desire to be better assured whether the distress I feel when I am not engaged in contemplation be good or evil, for it afflicts me to see myself distressed, because of the suspicion I have that that feeling arises from a want of mortification.

18. CHRIST. Thou art very careful, My spouse, and thereby thou givest Me no little content. Thou must know that that feeling is not evil but good, because this act of patience, mortification, and obedience, always tries My servants when they are taken from contemplation to action, only this act makes beginners like thyself suffer greatly. Those who are further advanced are not tried by it, and in the most perfect it is as sweet to them as honey from the honeycomb. The first feeling is good, because it is a sign that the soul is attracted towards that which is better, viz., to contemplation rather than action; the second, not to have this feeling, is better, since it is a token of the discernment which beholds in everything the circumstances which assist to the attainment of this thing or the other; and much better is the feeling of joy and delight (because it is a token of true perfection) in the execution of that which is deemed to be better, as is shown in the haste with which My Mother left the recollection of contemplation in order to visit and to minister to her cousin Elizabeth.

19. THE SPOUSE. But, my Jesus, as Thou hast told me many times that the sorrow I feel is not

wrong but good, how can it be better not to have it, and much better to be filled with joy?

20. CHRIST. It is true that I have told thee this, several times, and kept silence on the other point, but it was because the time was not yet come, and I saw how anxious thou wert for perfection, and that it would have no other effect, whilst thou wert a child in virtue, but to increase thy distress, if the desire increased without thou being able to satisfy it, for sadness is no more than a desire unfulfilled. And even now, know that this grief is very important to thy soul, since, in order that thou mayest at any rate fly from it, thou dost give thyself all the more to contemplation, solitude, and recollection, in which I desire that thou shouldst rest, seeing that for this cause I brought thee into Religion. This thou wouldst not meet with if this distress were wanting, because then thou wouldst plunge thyself to excess into the occupations of the active life, which to a certain degree hinder the contemplative life, and thou wouldst lose the gift of contemplation.

21. Unless I take from thee this grief, cling to it, and suffer it patiently, because it causes thee to sigh after contemplation, which at present is of very recent growth in thy soul, and when I see that it is firmly rooted in thee, I will withdraw thee from it to action, and thou shalt not give up contemplation, but thou wilt experience great delight and pleasure, such as My Mother experienced when she visited her cousin and ministered to her.

22. Let it then be thy resolution to be careful in following contemplation, suffering patiently the grief

which thou feelest when thou art withdrawn from it, and I, on My part, will be ready when the time comes, to turn this sorrow into gladness and rejoicing.

23. In order that the active life, which consists in works of mercy, may not weigh so heavily upon thee, and that thou mayest not imagine that it is not showing thee love to occupy thee in them, sometimes giving into thy care the infirmary, the kitchen, the sacristy, the place of porter, I desire to impress upon thee one thing, which thou must take to heart, and it is, that it is thy own passions and appetites which hinder the quiet and repose of contemplation, and these are mortified in the active life, and when they are mortified, the soul remains actually more free for contemplation, and thus Martha, like a good sister, helps Mary.

24. THE SPOUSE. This is all very good, my good Jesus. I already desire and love the exercises of the active life.

25. CHRIST. I do not say that thou dost not know how to wait for an opportune time, for since I wait for it, how much more oughtest thou. Let then the general rule be that thou remainest in recollection in thy cell, occupied day and night in contemplation, unless it be for some just cause, which will be one of the three of which I spoke to thee, and of these I do not wish that thou shouldst be judge, for thou wouldst err, but thy confessor or Superior, for it must not be anything which, in thy own opinion only, seems a matter of necessity, which shall withdraw thee from contemplation, but only that which appears to be so to thy confessor or Superior, and then thou wilt cease

from contemplation with much benefit to thyself and glory to Me.

*Fourth Thorn.*

26. CHRIST. In proportion as I desire to see the ground of thy heart free from the thorns and briars of which I have spoken, I desire also to see it greatly occupied and bristling with those of which I am now about to speak to thee, because I know that such thorns are the most true, certain, and sure path, and the shortest to perfection of any of those which thou canst seek out. It is, that beholding thyself, thou findest thyself greatly separated and removed far from the actual contemplation and loving vision of Me, which wounds thy heart with such sharp and piercing sorrow that it seemest to thee as if thou wert in hell. And it is no wonder, for the greatest pain that is suffered there, is not that of the senses, but the pain of loss, and of being separated from Me and not seeing Me, and this grief is the means whereby thy soul is prepared to receive the abundance of My grace, even as the souls in Purgatory are thereby prepared to receive My glory. For thou must know, that this grief causes in thee, as thou already seest, an immense and ineffable desire for My grace, and the greater it is the better, because blessed are they who are burnt up in the fire and the thirst of My grace, for they shall be satisfied with it.

27. Next, in order that the desires caused by this grief may increase in thee, I sometimes act as though I did not see or hear thee, and I even inflict on thee many signs of displeasure and disgrace, as I did on the Canaanite woman, so that thou imaginest thou



art already cast out of My grace, and knowest not what to do, seeing that thou dost not dare to despair, for thou wouldst give thy life and thy soul not to offend Me, whilst to follow Me thou canst not, because it is not granted thee to do so. Thou findest no other remedy but to humble thyself and to recognize thy wretchedness and little merit, making an abdication of thy own will to Mine, and resigning thyself to remain many days in that torment and distress, nay, even throughout eternity, if such be My most sweet and divine will. This is what I love eternally to see in thee, and now, mayest thou know by experience, that when thou hast brought thy soul to this supreme abdication of thyself to My will and good pleasure, immediately, without knowing how, thou wilt be annihilated and absorbed in the abyss of My Divinity, in such a way that thou wilt swoon in My presence.

28. THE SPOUSE. My Lord and my Spouse, now hast Thou declared to me wherefore I have suffered so often in this manner, without knowing that this path was so celestial and so glorious for Thee and for me. It is very welcome to me, for from henceforward I shall know what to do in such straits.

*Fifth Thorn.*

29. CHRIST. My Spirit takes ineffable delight in seeing how well thou dost receive that which is pleasing to Me, and therefore I desire to enter further into thy heart, and to show to thee other thorns which are not less celestial than those of which I have already spoken, and which are, if you examine them

well, the mental anxieties and glorious agonizing desires thou hast to understand and enjoy more than thou now understandest and enjoyest; and, finally, to behold thyself with Me, as on that Saturday, the Feast of My St. Louis, when thou thoughtest thou wert about to end thy life of anxieties and sweetly painful agonies to behold thyself with Me, and it gave Me much pleasure to see thee in this struggle, conquered and yet unconquered.

30. Thou must know that, speaking generally, no one in mortal flesh has seen Me in My own essence, because he would be overcome by the ineffable joy of beholding My Majesty and glory, and the human heart, not being able to bear it, would break, and the person would die. I see thou sayest, would it were so with thee. Therefore, the manner in which I show Myself is by figures and images, which, although they are not Myself, nor represent Me in every respect, seeing that I infinitely surpass them all, nevertheless, the images I place in the soul, by faith and grace, are so admirable and divine, that through them I am known to be infinitely good, beautiful, gentle, eternal, glorious, and omnipotent, that I fill all, am present to all, give being to all, and preserve and govern all; finally, to be a Light above all light, and a Being above all being, an infinite ocean of infinite perfections, infinitely perfect. This it is which causes in My Saints raptures, suspensions, and recollections, as oftentimes is the case with thyself, and all the more when I shine with infinite splendour in these souls, and that in such a manner, that they themselves, as I have already told thee, do not feel

able to comprehend how, nor how much, they understand; they only know that if they were to go on with that which they have begun to understand, it would nevertheless be an eternal and glorious life, and this understanding is life to them, even though they do not comprehend Me. For in that bright and celestial ignorance and darkness, the soul is filled with a heavenly admiration, which makes it still more greatly desire My light and My infinite majesty, and persevere ever in searching after it.

31. Thou must know that when the human understanding is occupied with anything, it cannot separate itself from it until it has mastered it and made itself fully acquainted with it. As my delight, therefore, is to be with the sons of men, I do not show Myself entirely to them, and thus they are continually seeking after Me, not knowing how to separate themselves from Me. This is the reason why I call Myself in Job, "the hidden Word," the Word because I declare Myself to them, and hidden because I never show the whole of Myself. Isaias, for the same reason, calls Me "a hidden God." I behold My spouse through a lattice, and I manifest Myself to her only in part, to the end that she may persevere more in seeking Me, that her hunger and thirst may increase, and that I may satisfy her, for she cannot desire to the extent that I give. Thus, the greater the thirst the greater the satiety, and the greater the satiety the greater the thirst, for it is written that those who eat Me hunger and thirst after Me, but in such a way that there always remains for them an infinite abundance and being and majesty to be known.

32. Well did Job know the great advantage there is in this My treatment, and in not giving Myself entirely to the soul; My servant Job placed this above all other exercises and kinds of prayer and intercourse with Me, saying, my soul choseth hanging, for it is satiety that yet hungers, light still veiled in obscurity, joy ever expanding. Recall to mind My Prophet, who always possessed Me, yet always sought Me, because he always (though only in part) enjoyed Me, and always, in fact, was ignorant of Me. For no one seeks that which he has, but his exercise was to enjoy Me always, and always to seek Me; and thus I desire that it should be with thee.

33. THE SPOUSE. I am very content, my Supreme Good, to have heard all these declarations respecting my ordinary thorns; it is very clear that Thou lovest me, since Thou teachest me as Thou didst formerly the Samaritan woman, and one worse than she. But I have a desire now which pricks me like a thorn, and gives me pain, and Thou wilt take it from me if in a few words Thou wilt sum up all Thou hast said. First, however, I beg Thee to say what ought I to have done in those death agonies into which I fell on the feast-day of St. Louis, in order that if I should fall into them again I may know what to do.

34. CHRIST. How is it that thou hast not learnt to apply the general rule to particular cases? Look at the first dialogue, and there thou wilt find an answer to thy question; the cause there was the knowledge and light which made thee long to be with Me, and this thou must preserve and augment in as far as thou canst, yielding up thy intelligence to the perfect

intelligence of that which I was engaged in manifesting to thee, and thy will to a love of, and to a sweet and loving complacency in, that which thou wert able to understand, allowing the soul to delight and rest itself as much as possible in it. Afterwards thou wert to allow fair play to whatever thou didst feel in thy heart and senses, without giving any sign of cries, unusual sighs, or sobs, because these things are not meet, excepting when thou art alone, and where no one can hear thee, and even then thou must not yield entirely to these emotions, otherwise they would injure thy heath and thy brain.

35. Remember also that in these cases it is not well to use too much effort in the repression of sensible devotion, because it will do thee as much harm to repress it as to allow it to be carried beyond due limits; therefore it is necessary that thou shouldst neither entirely repress it, nor permit thyself to be entirely overpowered and given up to it; for when thou hast not obtained it for thyself, but that it is graciously offered to thee by Me, there is no reason why thou shouldst decline it. For I have already told thee in the second dialogue, that sensible devotion (and more when I give it than when thou obtainest it thyself) is not injurious, but, on the contrary, beneficial when in moderation; as that always will be which we do not carry to an extreme. Sometimes, however, when it is My will, as little is this to be avoided, as I know well; in such cases thou canst do nothing but humble thyself and suffer, and fly from it as much as thou canst, for in the end it is not sinful, but good, and very good, since in it thou dost suffer.

And now let that suffice, and let us return to that which thou dost seek of Me—namely, that I would in a few words sum up this dialogue.

36. The first thing which, if thou dost remember, I told thee was, that purity of the soul is lovely, and yet thou must therefore exercise moderation and measure in thy desires, not imagining that any one can be lost by trifles; and if sometimes thou findest that thou hast committed faults, then thou shouldst derive humility from them, and not distress and restlessness, for these things do thee greater harm than the self-same little faults. Moreover, not the least injury is, that they blind thee, and so prevent thee from believing thy confessors, and Me in them.

37. Secondly, if thou dost recollect, I told thee the exercises of the contemplative life are better than those of the active life, although there are cases in which those of the active life are better. I do not, however, desire thou shouldst make them ordinary cases, except in the three cases of obedience, charity, and necessity.

38. Thirdly, if thou rememberest, I told thee that thou oughtest to communicate whenever thou art commanded to do so by those who have power over thee, thy conscience being free from present venial sin, for as I told thee, past sins are no hindrance towards thy receiving all the grace which I am accustomed to communicate.

39. Fourthly, I told thee that the pain of finding thyself separated from Me is the best way of coming to Me, if thou mortify and resign thyself, making an oblation of thy will to Mine, and being ready to

suffer that absence through time and eternity, if I should so desire it. And here I wished thee to take heed of one thing (nor must thou forget it), that sometimes I absent Myself from thy soul without any fault of thine, in order to prove thy humility, patience, and resignation. In this case thou must bear it with the greatest goodwill and the greatest pleasure thou canst, for to this perfect resignation and mortification may attain. Other times I absent Myself from thee for some negligence or faults which are inseparable from thy weakness, for I know how frail thy nature is, and that it is of clay, therefore I am not afraid. Here thou must be careful on the one hand to grieve over thy faults, and, on the other, to accept and suffer the penalty for it, which is My absence. And in suffering and lamenting over it, thou dost merit as much as by abhorring the sin. Thus to the fault must be added an act of sorrow, and to the penalty an act of love. Oh, if thou didst fulfil all this, My beloved daughter, how wouldst thou grow in perfection, and what a sweet and continual peace wouldst thou enjoy!

40. The fifth and last thing which I told thee was, that I greatly esteem thy anxiety to know and love Me more than thou already knowest and lovest Me, being persuaded, as thou indeed art, that there always remains for thee infinitely more to understand and to love. And do not vex thyself about trying to make thy Father understand this, for He knows that it is to trouble thyself in vain, since thou thyself dost not understand it, nor is it possible that thou shouldst, as I have said. It is not for this cause that I tell thee

that thou shouldst be silent and still, but in order that thou shouldst not grieve because thou canst not say what thou feelest. For it is not that thou dost not desire, but thou hast not the power, and in this thy Father and I find supreme pleasure and content. My peace be with thee, in order that thou mayest always give Me this pleasure.

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## DIALOGUE V.

ON THE MODERATION WHICH OUGHT TO BE MAINTAINED IN ALL SENSIBLE AFFECTIONS, EVEN WHEN THEY ARE GOOD, IN ORDER THAT PEACE MAY BE PRESERVED IN THE SOUL.

**THE SPOUSE.** Although Thou hast told me, Lord, of the thorns which prick My soul, I cannot yet understand how the desire of purity, which is so pleasing to Thee, and the sorrow of being withdrawn from contemplation, which Thou lovest so much, and the grief of seeing myself separated from Thee, which the holy feel to be as hell, and the desire to know and love Thee more than Thou hast commanded, can be an evil and a hindrance to my quiet and recollection.

2. **CHRIST.** In the first dialogue I explained it to thee, and I am very sure that if thou dost consider and reconsider it, thou wilt find there the root of thy thorns and perturbations, although it may be that what I told thee of spiritual joy and sorrow, thou didst not know how to apply to the other passions (which were there pointed out) and appetites no less



hurtful when they are carried to excess, and which are wont to occupy the ground and field of the heart.

3. Wherefore thou must know that enjoyment in the presence of good, and sadness in the presence of evil, are two sensitive passions of the soul. So, likewise, are love and complacency in good, and hatred and aversion from evil, opposed to that good; as well as desire to obtain the difficult good, and want of confidence in pursuing it, fortitude in encountering difficulties, and fear in shrinking from them, and finally, anger when we lose it.

4. These nine passions, if they are felt in moderation and guided by reason, aid thee in what is good; nevertheless, all and each of them are sufficient to disturb thy poor soul, and put it in a state of war, if they are not restrained and moderated. Therefore, thou must understand that as sensible delight causes laughter unless it be moderated, and inordinate sorrow causes despair; so, by an inordinate sensible desire for good, and flight from evil, the soul is disturbed and robbed of peace and quiet.

5. THE SPOUSE. According to this, my good Jesus, there is a sensible desire which requires rule and measure, and a spiritual desire which needs not this rule and measure; a sensible flight and a spiritual flight, and a sensible and spiritual fear, hope, and want of confidence and anger, as well as love and hatred; and one kind require moderation and the other kind not. Is it not so?

6. CHRIST. Dost thou not understand this? Know, then, that when to Me and My Angels are attributed anger, hatred, flight, desire, and fortitude, with other

passions such as thou hast, they are not sensible, but spiritual; for the spirit has not a body. By these passions, then, is meant a simple act of My divine will without passion, although it bears a resemblance to sensible passion in the exterior effects which I produce in My creatures. Thus, whilst the angry, in the desire to revenge themselves, are wont to lay hands on the object of their ire, I, chastening the evil without anger, by My simple and glorious will alone, am said to be angry and to take vengeance. And the same thing is said with regard to My Angels, and also thyself, when the rational appetite, which is the right will, and not the sensitive appetite, does these things. For thy spirit, when thou dost so rule it, is free and exempt, as regards its operation, from sensible appetites; and hence it is that the demons cannot understand thy thoughts and determinations, but, feeling the pulse of the sensitive portion, try to find whether there be in it any index of interior and spiritual acts, even as the physician infers health or sickness from the pulse.

7. Thus, thou hast spiritual delight, sorrow, desire, confidence, and fear, which spring in quiet and silence and freedom from sensible disturbances, from the knowledge of good and evil; and there are other sensible passions which overflow out of the will, or any other natural or supernatural cause, into the sensitive appetite, such as love, hatred, sorrow, joy, boldness, fear, and other sensible affections and motions. These passions are those which must be moderated, because they destroy thy quiet and blind thy soul if they are not moderated. This

applies also to the inordinate sensible desire for purity; and note this well, for it is that which destroys the peace of thy soul, because thou dost not content thyself with what thou hast in the interior of thy will, but also desirest to feel it in the whole of thy sensible appetite. Likewise in the first motions, which depend not on thee, thou imaginest that only to feel them defiles thee, when, in truth, unless there be consent (instead of displeasure at, and abhorrence of them, and patience in suffering them), they purify thy will, even as fire purifies gold.

8. Endeavour, My daughter and My spouse and My sister, to understand that it is these sensitive, stimulated, and burning passions of thy love, and not of Mine, which disturb thee and make thee restless, and rob thee of the peace which is so dear to thee, and that thou art not like to Me Who love and desire without sensitive passions.

9. There is certainly no reason why, when I am resting quietly within thy soul, thou shouldst be troubled because thou dost not feel in Communion and other exercises the same devotion as before. Dost not thou perceive that it is thy sensitive passions of love, sorrow, and desire, from which springs that feeling? Determine, then, to rule thyself by reason, and not by appetite—by the spirit, and not the flesh—by Myself, and not by thee.

10. If thou wert aware of the malice of thy enemies in days gone by, in which before communicating thou wert troubled and afflicted with vain shadows and fancies, and whilst communicating were free from them; how is it, now that thou dost not

perceive his artifices in causing thee to be afflicted and oppressed when thou dost communicate, and, after thou hast communicated, leaving thee calm and recollected?

11. Behold, My daughter, his intentions in these perturbations, which he inflicts upon thee before and during Communion—namely, he desires to force thee to leave off thy ordinary communions which are so pleasing in My sight, whilst, on the other hand, My intent is to prove thee, and to see whether thou betakest thyself to prayer, and whether thou communicatest for love of Me, or for thy own satisfaction. I also desire to see whether, in these holy exercises and acts, thou dost mortify thy sensitive pleasure and appetite; whether thou art pure and spiritual, and art drawn towards them by reason and by spirit only, and by love of Me, and not by appetite and sensible pleasure and love of thyself.

12. See also how the spiritual desires—love, joy, sorrow, fear, and hatred—act upon the soul, and cause peace and quiet, whilst those of the sensible appetite occasion perturbation and restlessness. Is it possible, then, that thou canst not content thyself with having spiritual joy and sorrow, but must also desire to feel it? Is it possible that thou wilt never succeed in recognizing these motions, and knowing when they are spiritual and when sensitive and carnal?

13. I desire to resume what I have said, and do thou take good heed to it. They are spiritual when, through knowledge of the good or of the evil, the will is efficaciously moved to desire, or not to desire,

the self-same good or evil ; on the other hand, they are sensitive when, from this desire or want of desire in the will, there springs up joy or sorrow in the heart and the senses, which dilates or contracts the heart, and causes laughter or tears, and from the heart communicates itself to all the senses. This I sometimes give and sometimes take away to prove and mortify, or to rejoice and console, interiorly and exteriorly, according to what My Prophet says, "My spirit and my senses rejoice in the living God." I have already told thee that thus My servants see Me a little while and a little while they do not perceive Me.

14. The conclusion of this is that thou shouldst remember well what I said to thee, in the first dialogue, on sensitive and spiritual joy ; that is to say, that spiritual joy must be without rule and measure in order to be very good ; and that the sensitive must be in measure and moderation in order that it may not be hurtful and injurious. Thou must, moreover, apply the same rule to desire, love, hatred, and the other affections, as well spiritual as sensitive, because the pure spiritual act of thy will is better in proportion as it is more intense and more determined in desiring good, and not desiring evil, whilst it is the sensitive desire, and want of desire, which associates itself with that rule that must be moderated.

15. Be not, also, so foolish as not to know how to distinguish between the pure acts of thy spiritual will and the sensitive desires of thy bestial sensitive appetite ; otherwise thou wilt convert thyself into a beast by esteeming the one more than the other, when, in truth, thou oughtest to tread down

and mortify the sensible appetite as much as thou canst, taking no account of it, nor esteeming what thou dost tread under foot. But the other spiritual will thou must prize above the apple of thy eye, and in the centre of thy heart, because in it consists thy life, thy affection, and beauty, according to what is written, "All the glory of the King's daughter is within in golden borders;" that is to say, it is within the soul in the pure and simple acts of the gold of charity, which, because they are so interior, secret, and pure, hide themselves from the licentious gaze of the infernal spirits thy opponents.

16. Thou wilt likewise understand from hence the motive and cause wherefore I draw My most beloved spouses into interior solitude, and admonish them to pray in concealment in the centre of their most pure wills. For it is that they may not be in sight of their enemies, who have a greater desire to behold them than it is possible for thee to conceive.

17. Only I warn thee, and look at it well, that thou art careful in mortifying thy appetites and senses, because it is through them that the devils behold thee, remembering that whenever thou dost satisfy any one of them, thou comest forth in sight of thy abominable enemies. Recollect also, My daughter and My sister, that they do all they can to make thee obtain sensible joy, desire, fear, and hope, and endeavour to know new things and exterior follies, only because they wish thee to come forth where they can see thee, speak with thee, and solicit thee to leave Me, thy Spouse. Is it such as these, then, that thou canst love?

18. Believe me, My daughter, that as the whole of My endeavour is directed towards bringing thee to interior recollection, where I and thou may repose together; so, on the other hand, the whole endeavour of the devil is to entice thee to satisfy thy sensible and exterior appetites, in order that, through them and their excesses, he may deprive Me of thee, My spouse.

19. Love then, My daughter, interior and exterior recollection, and do not withdraw thyself from it except for the three causes of which I have already spoken to thee—charity, obedience, and necessity; for then thou wilt not be withdrawn from thy solitude, unless I withdraw thee, and then, too, I will guard thee. Do thou love mortification, even in small matters, through love of Me, even as I loved it for thy sake and for thy example and instruction, and thus thou wilt keep thyself free from the eyes of thy enemies, and wilt enjoy My vision which is blessedness.

## DIALOGUE VI.

OF THE PRAYER OF QUIET, AND WHAT IS MEANT BY  
THINKING OF NOTHING IN IT.

THE SPOUSE. Even yet my thorns are not ended, my good Jesus, for now I remember one thing of which I spoke to Thee in the third dialogue, about thinking of nothing in prayer. Although Thou didst explain it all to me then, still I am troubled with a little scruple which will not let me rest until Thou hast replied to it. It is, that very learned men say that there is nothing which better disposes the soul for Thee to come to it than thinking of neither good nor evil in prayer, which is a very hard thing to do, for it seems to me that my soul is then like a mirror which reflects nothing, or a canvas on which nothing is painted, or like a beast or a savage that thinks of nothing.

2. CHRIST. Thou speakest well in this, My daughter. If, however, thou dost look at and understand things as they ought to be understood, thou wilt see that such men speak very rightly, because two things may be meant by the doctrine of thinking of nothing. The first, to leave the soul without any subject of thought whatever, without going further, and this would be to teach thee like a savage as thou dost say; therefore this is bad, and it never entered into the imagination of these writers to teach any such doctrine; they only meant that of two evils the



least must be chosen, which is to think of nothing, rather than to think ill, even as the proverb says, "It is better to be alone than in bad company," and if the soul feel itself to be so tired, in order to rest itself, it thinks of nothing, as when it sleeps, and this is not wrong, any more than it is wrong to sleep, unless it be done often and for a long time together.

3. The other thing, which is included in this doctrine, consists in not thinking indeed, but that only for a very brief instant, wherein the soul divests itself of its own understanding and will, keeping in view the self-same nothing, and then for that brief moment it sees nothing, because it has divested itself of all, and even of Me ; for then it does not know My will, but is expecting it, and waiting until I act upon it as upon a pure and clear mirror, undimmed by wandering figures.

4. Now, no soul attains to this point but immediately I lay hold of it, and transform it, and unite it with Me during the whole time that I desire to do so. No limit or measure can then be placed to the delight it takes in these ineffable benefits, for even it cannot succeed in understanding it, and of this thou art a testimony.

5. Therefore, My daughter, thou oughtest to enter upon this, but not for any long time, with the intention of attaining, by means of thinking of nothing, such as My Saints teach it, a good as great as this is. For, even as I created all things out of nothing, so, in that nakedness wherein nothing that is thine remains, I find all the perfection that I desire, and thus thou shalt see that it will be with thee each time that thou dost recollect

thyself interiorly, and say, I desire nothing, O Lord, but Thee.

6. THE SPOUSE. I desire, Lord, to be ever in this nothing, since from it spring so many blessings for my soul.

7. CHRIST. Be prudent, My daughter; do not desire to be always in this nothing, because that would be carnality, as I told Thee. Endeavour, therefore, to attain to it only as often as thou art apart from Me, and thinking of creatures, and then for no longer time than is necessary. Wait until I come and take possession of thy soul with My presence and My grace, for, coming I will come and will not delay, and if thou shouldst sometimes weary of being in this nothing, and thou canst not endure it without suffering great trouble and heaviness, then think with humility of the good which thou shalt soon receive, for this will often be a help to thee.

8. Remember also, that thou canst receive more than thou canst give, and suffer more than thou canst do, in order that as I am an abyss of gifts, so thou mayest be as an abyss to receive them. With nothing canst thou dispose thyself better for receiving and suffering, as in thinking nothing, according to what has been already said. Hereby thou wilt understand the answers which My great Dionysius gave to those who inquired of him, for being as he was My servant, he was of great use to others in seeking after My love. I say, because, *sciebat pati*—he knew how to suffer and to receive, preparing himself in that nothing for it.

9. THE SPOUSE. Tell me, my Lord, does this nothing spring from a knowledge of oneself?

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10. CHRIST. No, My daughter, because that is a knowledge by which the soul refers all that it has and is to Myself, according to nature and grace, being as I am the author of all ; and on the other side, it sees that it is nothing of itself, therefore it plunges into the deepest abyss of all things. I desire that thou shouldst likewise do this, in order that thou mayest live in great peace, and mayest be ready to descend into the other nothing, whereby thou wilt be disposed from time to time to receive my grace. This will suffice, unless thou shouldst tell Me that there is another nothing besides these two, and I reply that there is, but it is not one which I desire to see in thee, for it is sin, which is nothing else but a deprivation of my grace, incurred by thinking, saying, or doing anything contrary to My commandments. This nothing, joined to the other of the knowledge of self, brings with it humiliation, as thou mayest thyself see, for nothing humbles thee so much as when thinking of thy own faults, even when they are only venial, thou dost make Me this offering of thyself, confessing that thou art unworthy of My presence, and yielding thyself wholly up to Me. This is an exercise of humility, gratitude, and love, springing from a contrite heart, which I do not despise, but on the contrary, I bestow upon it much grace and glory.

## DIALOGUE VII.

THAT THE WAYS OF GOD ARE MANY, AND NO ONE  
OUGHT TO HINDER WHAT GOD GIVES TO EACH.

CHRIST. Whenever, My daughter, I see thee disturbed and pained at hearing it said that time is lost in meditating upon My life and Passion, and that it is a wandering from the path of prayer, after thy fashion of understanding it, I likewise am pained to hear My ministers say such things. For if I were no more than pure man, they might well say that they would not always meditate upon the mysteries of My Humanity, but as I am Man and very God, it is meet that souls should often occupy themselves with the loving consideration of My Humanity, as My Apostle did, when he said, "If I knew Christ once according to the flesh, now I know Him not," that is, I do not now contemplate Him as man, but as God. For the knowledge of My Humanity is inferior to that of My Divinity, and therefore he calls it the door and the way whereby he enters into the contemplation of My Divinity, with which Thou art ordinarily occupied.

2. If My servants look attentively at my ways, they will see that it is not by one but by many that I draw souls home. If, also, they will remember that the heavenly Jerusalem has not one but twelve gates; if too, they will recollect that in the house of My Father are many dwellings, and will bear in mind that the soil of hearts gives different kinds of fruits in its

various territories, they will not weary themselves about all souls taking the same way, or entering in by the same gate, or dwelling in the same mansion, nor will they look for the same fruit from all. A cold soil, My daughter, is good for some kinds of fruits, and a warm soil for others.

3. Dost thou not remember that in the division of My talents and graces, I gave to one person one talent, and to another two, and to another five? I know not wherefore some of My servants weary themselves, desiring that he should have two talents of prayer to whom I only gave one, and that he should have five on whom I only bestowed two. My calling, they should remember, is louder than theirs; and thus, although they may call upon souls to take one road, it is of little use if I call upon them to take another, excepting to drag them along, and torment them, desiring them to follow their doctrines as humble and obedient children; and, on the other hand, not being able to resist the strength of My Spirit, which leads them along a different path.

4. This is the cause why, after having broken one's head, forcing the soul along through fear, in the end love always acts. For it is in vain to call the soul to consider the four last things when I call it by love, and vain also to call it to meditation upon My Humanity, if I consume and burn it up in the fire of My Divinity, nor can any one withdraw to contemplation the soul which I feast and entertain with meditation.

5. So that if My own servants and members do not understand by what path I call the soul, and if,

afterwards, they do not conform themselves to Me, teaching a doctrine in agreement with, and not contrary to Mine, they labour in vain, and in the end can do nothing but what I will.

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### DIALOGUE VIII.

OF THE WAYS OF PRAYER, HOW MANY THEY ARE,  
AND WHAT.

**T**HE SPOUSE. My Lord, since Thou hast told me that the ways are many, and the gates many, and the dwellings many, and the talents many, tell me, if at any time I should leave the path, how I may know, if I should take a wrong path, how to turn back, and if once in the right path, how I may know how to discern it.

2. CHRIST. Thou must know, My spouse, that all these paths, gates, and talents, I am wont to reduce to three, the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive ways. The purgative, is to weep over sins; the illuminative, to exercise virtues; the unitive, to become one with Me, through loving knowledge, and a will conformed to and united with Mine, desiring what I desire, and not desiring what I do not desire. The first way is good, the second better, and the third best of all.

3. In addition, however, to these three ways, thou must know that there are others which are connected with them, and which I desire to tell thee of, that

thou mayest not tire thyself in seeking them; and these are vocal prayer, meditation, acts of virtue, contemplation of My Divinity and Humanity combined, and union.

#### FIRST WAY.

##### VOCAL PRAYER.

4. CHRIST. The first way is vocal prayer, and he to whom I give it receives a talent, and so good a one, that if he knew how to plant it, he would gain Heaven. There are, however, souls so proud and rebellious, that although they find themselves advancing in devotion and virtue by means of this vocal prayer, and go back and remain dry when they leave it off, yet spite of all this, they do not desire to make use of it as I desire they should. For they imagine that in giving it to them, I bestow upon them one talent only, and they desire more. The worst is, that My servants frequently aid them in this, not remembering that they must not look at the number of the talents, but at the use which may be made of them, because if from one talent they derive as much profit for themselves as another person does from three or five, why are they so vainly ambitious to have great talents, instead of being content with what I give them. And although others put to profit talents which they have not got, they may put their one talent to such account, that no one shall be able to equal them.

5. Thus, if another should surpass them in contemplation (which they do not know how to make), they will have the advantage in the employment of their

talent, which the others, perhaps, do not employ as they ought; and on the other hand, as little can they, although they may desire to use vocal prayer, profit by it. The members of My mystical Body have not all the same office, but each one has his own office. The eyes do not hear, the nose does not taste, the hands do not walk; they who do not understand or perceive this, desire that the whole body should be one member, which would be a monstrous and frightful thing.

6. There are many souls who, as soon as ever they begin to say the rosary and other prayers and devout words, immediately have their spirits kindled; while if they keep their lips closed, devotion is also kept confined, and the spirit is chilled. Such souls must keep this path, their confessor must aid them, but not when he perceives (note this well) a true dislike to, and an aversion from it, and a real facility and devotion for meditation and contemplation. Then voluntary vocal prayer must be left off, and the soul must come to Me by the path which I shall open, and to which I shall call it.

7. And although it is true that sometimes I give vocal prayer for a season, yet at the time when it seemeth good to Me, I take it away and give another kind of prayer. So that of these two talents and ways, neither is so eternal and invariable as never to be changed, but I exchange them time after time, when I see it is for My glory and the profit of the soul.



## SECOND WAY.

## OF MEDITATION.

8. The prayer of meditation is another path and method of prayer, and to those on whom I bestow it, I give, as it were, two talents.. For the tongue being silent, the understanding and imagination are not silent, but recall to remembrance such or such passage in My life, or in that of My Saints, and meditate and examine into it, and compare the one with the other, and apply it to themselves, deriving from it the profit which is offered them in it. For example, when considering My birth and My poor crib, My humility and love are beheld, and the soul is enamoured with what it sees in Me, and desires poverty, humility, and love; it considers, moreover, how well the Saints imitated these virtues, and what good it did them, and how much evil those suffer who do not imitate them, and considers that it will be the same with itself if it follow their example. This kind of prayer is very extensive, for it covers the number of events in My life of three and thirty years, and all the benefits which it has received, receives, and will receive from My liberal hand.

9. THE SPOUSE. We have arrived, Lord, at my torment, and it is certainly very great when I see such variety of forests as are contained in this kind of prayer and yet I cannot betake myself to them or taste their flowers.

10. CHRIST. Since thou cannot, My daughter, do not desire that which I do not wish you should be

able to do ; for to desire that which I do not desire does not fulfil thy desire, and it is a torment not to obtain it. Desire, then, what I desire and thou shalt obtain it, and shalt depart in peace. If I do not give these two talents, wilt thou drag them from Me by force? No, certainly. Humble thyself, then, and take what I give, and which is far better for thee than what thou desirest.

### THIRD WAY.

#### PRAYER OF ACTS OF VIRTUES.

11. Acts of virtues are another kind of prayer, and he who receives it receives as it were three talents. For the end of meditation is to make acts of virtues, and to move the will with holy affections. Thus if My birth be meditated upon, it will be for the purpose of making acts of poverty, humility, and love, and thus I bestow upon those to whom I give it My faith, without meditation, virtue, and grace, a gift and a grace equal to three talents, in order that he may exercise himself in acts of these virtues, and thus I enable him to reach the aim and end without first training himself with long meditations. This way of prayer is as extensive as are the virtues of which whole books are full.

12. This kind of prayer is good for the increasing in virtue and merit, because in the same manner as virtues are lost when we cease from the acts, so is the exercise of them engendered and augmented thereby. For it is seen by experience that faith is augmented by contemplating and believing the truths

of faith, and charity by loving, and hope by looking for My promises, and so on with the rest—humility, patience, obedience, and mortification.

#### FOURTH WAY.

##### OF CONTEMPLATION.

13. The contemplation of My Divinity is the fourth kind of prayer, and on those to whom I give it, I bestow, as it were, four talents. This talent is as copious and fertile as are My attributes and perfections, which are infinitely perfect and cause ineffable perfection in those who contemplate them and who love Me as thou sometimes dost, and desirest always to do; contemplating more and more My infinite goodness, beauty, wisdom, power, sweetness, and eternal glory.

#### FIFTH WAY.

##### OF MYSTICAL PRAYER, WHICH IS THE UNION OF THE DIVINITY WITH THE HUMANITY.

14. The fifth kind of prayer is to unite My Divinity with My Humanity, that is to remain beholding and enhancing all I did in the world, however small an action it was. This was the prayer used by My great Augustine when, full of admiration, he exclaimed, God-Man! as if he had said, God-Man, Who is benumbed with cold, Who feels fatigue, Who eats from hunger, Who weeps from compassion, Who gives Himself My food, and dies of love! At the same time understanding that I am in all creatures by My essence, presence, and power, the soul must

have them in highest respect and reverence, prostrating itself before all, and submerging itself in the abyss of its nothingness and sin. This is the highest kind of prayer, which I give but seldom, nevertheless there is no one talent, and no several ways and gates by which I do not sometimes raise My servants to the highest kind of prayer, which is that of union.

## SIXTH WAY.

## OF THE PRAYER OF UNION.

15. The last and richest way is that of union, and on those to whom I give it I bestow, as it were, six talents. Thou hast it very frequently, and when thou art in it take account that although thou livest, thou dost not live, but I in thee, even as if thou and I were one, which is as though thou didst live, and yet not thou but I in thee, as My Apostle says also, "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." What dost thou think is the cause that for many years thou wert not conscious of any good thing or any evil, or even of thyself? It was that in truth thou wert absorbed in ineffable peace and most sweet contemplation of Me, and whilst performing the exercises of Martha and Mary it seemed to thee as if thou hadst not done them. Dost thou know what this was and what it is which thou always hast? That I live in thee, and not thou in thyself, but in Me.

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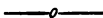
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